

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

THE PARSON ADMINISTRATION
2018-2024



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Governor Parson and First Lady Parson at the governor's office desk in the Missouri State Capitol during his final year in office.

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Cover photo: A B-2 Stealth Bomber soars over the Missouri State Capitol in a flyover during the Bicentennial Inauguration on January 11, 2021.

Above photo: On September 10, 2024, a robust crowd attended the second annual Wild Game Dinner held on the lawn of the Missouri Governor's Mansion.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM GOVERNOR MICHAEL L. PARSON	6
CHAPTER ONE	9
Team 57	
CHAPTER TWO	25
Crisis Management	
CHAPTER THREE	45
COVID	
CHAPTER FOUR	71
Education and Workforce Development	
CHAPTER FIVE	89
Infrastructure	
CHAPTER SIX	105
Better Government	
CHAPTER SEVEN	127
Missouri Economy	
CHAPTER EIGHT	141
Missouri’s Agriculture Governor	
CHAPTER NINE.	155
First Lady Teresa Parson: A Heart for Missouri Children	
APPENDIX.	173
2021 State of the State Address	
TIMELINE	197



Michael L. Parson
GOVERNOR
STATE OF MISSOURI

To my fellow Missourians,

January 13, 2025, marks my final day as your Governor. For more than six years, we've stood tall in the face of hardships while achieving historic wins that will continue to move Missouri forward long after we're gone, and it can all be attributed to the strength, resiliency, kindness, courage, and just plain old Missouri grit the people of this great state hold.

Together, with a relentless focus on workforce development and infrastructure, we've accomplished just about everything we set out to do. We've fully funded the K-12 foundation formula every year, boosted starting teacher pay from \$25,000 to \$40,000 per year, and provided opportunities for veteran teachers to earn pay increases too. Additionally, we've made historic investments in career and technical education, added nearly 65,000 new apprentices, and boosted higher education funding by nearly 30 percent.

We will also finally upgrade and transform I-70 to six lanes across our entire state after it's been talked about in Jefferson City for decades. We've built over 1,000 bridges, repaired 50 percent of our entire highway system, and made once-in-a-generation investments in our rural lettered roads.

We've maintained our AAA credit rating and achieved the lowest unemployment ever recorded in our state's history at 2.1 percent. We've paid our bills and left the State of Missouri with 50 percent less debt than when we started. We've cut through nearly 20 percent of regulations and red tape on the books, and we're

leaving \$1.9 billion on the bottom line for future administrations. We cut taxes five times, including the single largest income tax cut in our state's history, reducing income tax burdens by over 20 percent while adding 175,000 new jobs and tens of billions of dollars in business investment to our economy.

But these aren't our wins. These are wins for you, your kids, and your grandkids. For Teresa and me, it's always been about the next generations having the opportunity to achieve their American Dream. Today, our economy is strong; our democracy is strong; our people are strong; and we can keep it that way if we continue to put people first. We've truly planted the seeds today for a better Missouri tomorrow. But we couldn't have done it without the talented, committed, and hard-working members of our team: Team57. As the sun begins to set on my public service career, I'm filled with pride knowing we have public servants of such caliber serving our great state who are always willing to roll up their sleeves and get things done.

The First Lady and I came to Jefferson City with our heads held high, and we'll be returning to the farm with our heads held high. Because we've never forgotten where we came from, and every step of the way we've simply done what we believed in our hearts was the right thing for all Missourians. Words cannot express the sincere appreciation I have for this state and our people. So, I simply say to the more than 6 million Missourians who I have had the absolute privilege of serving, it has truly been the honor of my life to be **your** 57th Governor of the great State of Missouri.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael L. Parson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" and last name "Parson" clearly distinguishable.

Michael L. Parson
Governor



Governor Parson's staff poses on the steps of the Missouri Governor's Mansion during a staff retreat on July 13, 2022.



CHAPTER ONE

TEAM 57

“**Being a good leader isn’t about being the best, it’s about making those around you better.**”

—Governor Parson

On Friday, June 1, 2018, Michael L. Parson was sworn in as the fifty-seventh governor of Missouri after the former governor resigned following allegations of misconduct. This was the first time since 1857 that a Missouri governor resigned.

From day one, Governor Parson gathered a team of talented individuals who would help him fulfill his promise to return integrity and a people-first mindset to the governor’s office. While incoming governors typically have a few months to hire staff, Governor Parson had just one weekend to grow his lieutenant governor’s staff of five into a fully functioning governor’s office. Governor Parson called upon Aaron Willard, an accomplished public servant serving under President Trump’s administration, to return to Missouri as chief of staff and help lead a skillful team to move Missouri forward.

This team, affectionately known as “Team 57,” helped spearhead the changes Governor Parson made across state government. From the receptionist at the front desk, to his senior staff, to his department directors, Governor Parson sought public servants who would put the needs of Missourians first. Governor Parson held regular senior staff meetings to discuss major challenges and decisions. After each senior staff member had a chance to weigh in on an issue, the governor would make his decision and take responsibility for each choice.

Regular cabinet meetings with department directors were held to hear the needs of state team members and improve collaboration between departments. The governor’s cabinet was charged with making



Senior staff meets with Governor Parson to discuss school safety on March 6, 2019. From left: Deputy Chief of Staff Robert Knodell, Governor Parson, Chief of Staff Aaron Willard, Policy Director Kayla Hahn, Communications Director Steele Shippy, and Policy Counsel John Shikles.

state government more efficient and accountable by investing in the state workforce, incentivizing better performance, and regularly reassessing how to better serve Missourians.

Governor Parson celebrated personal life milestones and shared his convictions about current issues and legislative actions with Team 57. Team 57 was a unique team that truly became a family over the years. From marriages, births, and the happiest days of life to the darker days such as a death in the family, they always supported each other and cared for one another just like a family would do. Team 57 was never about egos or advancing their own agendas; all were just simply proud to be a part, whether big or small, of the historic work accomplished on behalf of all Missourians. During each meeting, Governor Parson would charge his staff to remember it was never about a governor's last name. The office of governor is never about one person or one political party, and while it is a privilege to serve Missourians from the state capitol, they must never forget their time serving in the governor's office is limited and hard work and steadfast dedication are necessary to accomplish great change in state government.

Governor Parson's administration would focus on two clear nonpartisan priorities that could move Missouri forward: workforce development and infrastructure. Governor Parson and the words "workforce development" and "infrastructure" will become synonymous in the archives of Missouri history. Along with these victories, there were many more for the people of Missouri.



Governor Parson addresses his leadership team during a governor's cabinet meeting on June 12, 2024.



Governor Parson's staff poses with the Kansas City Chiefs' Super Bowl LVIII Lombardi Trophy and Super Bowl LVII Lombardi Trophy in the governor's office on June 27, 2024.

GOVERNOR'S CABINET MEMBERS (JUNE 1, 2018–PRESENT)

Office of Administration

Ken Zellers

Sarah Steelman (previous)

Department of Agriculture

Chris Chinn, 2023–2024 President, Midwest Association of State Departments of Agriculture; 2022–2023 Vice President, Midwest Association of State Departments of Agriculture; 2021–2022 Secretary, Midwest Association of State Departments of Agriculture

Department of Conservation

Jason Sumners

Sara Parker Pauley (previous), 2020–2021 President, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

Department of Corrections

Trevor Foley (acting)

Anne Precythe (previous), 2018–2020 Treasurer and 2020–2023 President of the Correctional Leaders Association; 2020–2023 Member of the Council on Criminal Justice; 2019 Advisory Board Member and 2020–2023 Executive Member of the Board for the Council of State Governments Justice Center; 2015–2020 Advisory Board Member for the National Institute of Corrections

Department of Commerce and Insurance (formerly Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions and Professional Registration)

Chlora Lindley-Myers, 2023 President of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners; Executive Committee Member, International Association of Insurance Supervisors

Department of Economic Development

Michelle Hataway

Maggie Kost (previous acting)

Rob Dixon (previous)

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Dr. Karla Eslinger

Dr. Margie Vandeven (previous), 2024 President of the Council of Chief State School Officers

Department of Health and Senior Services

Paula Nickelson, Past President and Region VII Director, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

Richard Moore (previous acting)

Donald Kauerauf (previous acting)

Robert Knodell (previous acting)

Dr. Randall Williams (previous), Chair, Public Health Preparedness Policy Committee; Board Member, Board of Directors, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development

Dr. Bennett Boggs, 2024 Board Member, Board of Directors, National Work Readiness Council

Zora Mulligan (previous), 2021 Exceptional Leader of the Year and 2021–2022 Treasurer, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association

Department of Labor and Industrial Relations

Anna Hui, 2019–2020 Board President, National Association of State Workforce Agencies; 2018–2020 President, 2022–2024 Secretary/Treasurer, National Association of Government Labor Officials; 2024 President, International Association of Industrial Accidents Boards and Commissions; 2023 Vice Chairperson, US Department of Labor Workforce Information Advisory Council; 2020–2022 Member, Advisory Committee on Data for Evidence Building

Department of Mental Health

Valerie Huhn, 2023–Present Secretary/Treasurer, National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services

Mark Stringer (previous), 2018–2019 Immediate Past President National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors

Department of Natural Resources

Dru Buntin, 2022 and 2023 Environmental Council of the States Region 7 Executive Committee Representative; 2024 Environmental Council of the States Water Committee Chair; 2024 Environmental Council of the States Executive Committee Member

Carol Comer (previous), 2017 and 2018 Environmental Council of the States Compliance Committee Chair; 2021 Environmental Council of the States Region 7 Executive Committee Representative

Department of Public Safety

Sandra Karsten

Drew Juden (previous)

Department of Revenue

Wayne Wallingford

Joseph Plaggenberg (previous acting)

Ken Zellers (previous)

Joel Walters (previous)

Department of Social Services

Robert Knodell

Jennifer Tidball (previous acting)

Dr. Steve Corsi (previous)

Department of Transportation

Ed Hassinger (interim), voting member of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Transportation Policy Forum

Patrick McKenna (previous), Chair of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Committee on Safety

MO HealthNet Division

Todd Richardson

Missouri National Guard

Adjutant General Levon Cumpston, Chair for the Army National Guard's Homeland Response Readiness Advisory Council; Vice Chair of the Army National Guard Force Structure and Modernization Committee for the Adjutants General Association of the United States

Adjutant General Stephen Danner (previous)

GOVERNOR'S STAFF (June 1, 2018–Present)

Justin Alferman
Tammy Allee
Hannah Ankenbauer
Phillip Arnzen
Kyle Aubuchon
Andrew Bailey
Julie Baker
David Bilger
Jamie Birch
Nick Brandt
Tianna Brooks
Jake Buxton
Jessalynn Cairer
Kevin Carr
Shari Childs
Sean Christiansen
Marsha Clark
Ryan Conway
Caroline Coulter
Clifton Davis
Jordan Duecker
Jeff Earl
Jessie Eiler
Heather Eisterhold
Drew Erdmann
Macee Ernst
Jill Fansler
Paula Fick
Kay Fitzpatrick
Wyatt Fletcher
Ward Franz
John Garrison*
Debbie Goeller
Madison Green
Francesca Haass
Marsha Haefner
Kayla Hahn
Michelle Hallford
Jared Hankinson
Erica Hansbrough
Reid Hansen
Meckenzie Hayes
Tyler Hobbs
Victoria Hooker
Jill Irvin

Tanner Isenberger
Amanda Jaffe*
Ellanie Jamison
Kelli Jones
Taylor Jones
Dakota Julian
Brandon Kampeter
Sherri Kempf
Robert Knodell
Holly Krieg
Chris Limbaugh
Katy Linnenbrink
Elizabeth Luebbering
Sheila Luebbert
Marylyn Luetkemeyer
Tara McCloskey
Juhlin Medlin
Chris Moreland
Harry Otto
Gabrielle Picard
Kevin Pleus
Wilson Powell III*
Evan Rodriguez
Sam Rourke
Justina Salarano
Rodney Sammons
James Schisler*
Summer Shaw
Johnathan Shiflett
John Shikles
Steele Shippy
Taylee Soukup
Kevin Spaulding
Thayne Tamerius
Zac Teague
Ben Terrell
Brock Timmons
Alex Tuttle
Emma Vincent
Stephanie Whitaker
Aaron Willard
Randy Wright
Jonathan Yelton

**Fellow, Michael S. Dukakis Governors' Summer Fellowship Program, Harvard Kennedy School*



Governor Parson receives a flood impact briefing from Chief of Staff Aaron Willard and Policy Director Kayla Hahn ahead of a meeting with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regarding the Missouri River on April 8, 2021.



The governor's staff rides a 1929 Ford Model AA Fire Truck at the Missouri State Fair on August 16, 2023.

HISTORIC FIRSTS

Throughout Governor Parson's tenure as governor, he experienced many historic firsts that will likely not be repeated. Just the fact he took over as governor after his predecessor resigned was unique within itself. During his time in office, he was tasked to appoint five Missouri statewide elected officials: Lieutenant Governor Mike Kehoe, Attorney General Eric Schmitt, State Treasurer Scott Fitzpatrick, Attorney General Andrew Bailey, and State Treasurer Vivek Malek, who was the first minority statewide official.



Governor Parson and Attorney General Andrew Bailey share a moment in the attorney general's office ahead of Bailey's swearing-in ceremony on January 3, 2023.



Governor Parson and State Treasurer Vivek Malek shake hands on the House floor ahead of Malek's swearing-in ceremony on January 17, 2023.

A significant role of the governor is to make judicial appointments. He had the opportunity to set a record of more than 190 judicial appointments—nearly 50 percent of the state’s entire judiciary—surpassing a previous record of 132. Governor Parson also had the honor of appointing three Missouri Supreme Court judges. It was over thirty years since a governor had named two supreme court judges within the same year and a couple of decades since a governor had appointed three during a single administration. His first appointment was the Honorable Robin Ransom, the first African American woman to serve as a judge on the Supreme Court of Missouri. He later had the opportunity to appoint Judge Kelly C. Broniec and Judge Ginger K. Gooch. For the first time in Missouri’s history, there was a female majority on the Missouri Supreme Court. The judicial ideology of the Missouri Supreme Court significantly changed when Governor Parson made these three appointments. He truly reshaped and strengthened the makeup of the state’s highest court for decades to come.



Governor Parson alongside the Honorable Judge Robin Ransom and her family ahead of the historic announcement making her the first African American woman to serve on the Supreme Court of Missouri on May 24, 2021.



The Honorable Kelly Broniec addresses media for the first time after Governor Parson selected Broniec to be a judge on the Supreme Court of Missouri on September 12, 2023.



The Honorable Ginger Gooch with Governor Parson ahead of the announcement of Gooch's selection to be a judge on the Supreme Court of Missouri on October 30, 2023.

Governor Parson also appointed Gabriel (Gabe) Gore as City of St. Louis circuit attorney. After former circuit attorney Kim Gardner resigned amid scandal, the governor met with City of St. Louis officials and other regional leaders to help restore law and order in St. Louis and faith in the criminal justice system. Upon the office's immediate vacancy, Evan Rodriguez,



Gabe Gore addresses media for the first time after Governor Parson announces Gore's appointment as the next City of St. Louis circuit attorney on May 19, 2023. From left: US Attorney Saylor Fleming, City of St. Louis Sheriff Vernon Betts, St. Louis Metropolitan Police Commissioner Robert Tracy, City of St. Louis Mayor Tishaura Jones, Gabe Gore, Governor Parson, Attorney General Andrew Bailey, Department of Public Safety Director Sandra Karsten, and Missouri State Highway Patrol Superintendent Colonel Eric Olson.

Governor Parson's general counsel, served as interim circuit attorney to ensure stability in the office through the transition. After eighteen applicants and a stringent interview process, Gore was selected and answered the call to serve his community. Per state statute, Gore will serve out the remainder of the current circuit attorney term, which ends on January 1, 2025. This marks the first time in recent Missouri history a governor has appointed someone to this role.

Governor Parson also pledged to do things differently than administrations had done before, and this included addressing the backlog of nearly four thousand pending clemency applications sitting in the governor's office. For years, there had been no formal review process for clemency applications, and Governor Parson believed four thousand people in limbo waiting for an answer was not serving Missourians. He directed his staff to begin reviewing clemency files and getting cases to his desk for a decision as timely as possible. Whether clemency was granted or denied, he and his team were committed—at the very least—to providing answers to as many individuals as possible. Thanks to the governor's dedicated review process, the clemency backlog he inherited has been cleared for the first time in decades. Governor Parson and Team 57 are proud of their commitment to working diligently to address the backlog and grant more than 775 pardons and twenty-six commutations and deny approximately three thousand requests for clemency.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Another gubernatorial duty is the appointment of qualified individuals to Missouri's nearly two hundred state boards and commissions. These appointments enable citizen-led oversight by industry professionals as well as members of the public in the key areas of education, health, public safety, finance, agriculture, natural resources, elections, and tourism. Governor Parson encouraged all Missourians to participate in their government and sought qualified candidates for appointments to state boards and commissions.

The filling of vacant county seats also fell to Governor Parson, and during his six years in office, 255 county office vacancies were filled. From high-profile appointments like the Public Service Commission to the more overlooked positions, each decision was made with careful vetting and thought. During the Parson administration, 1,277 appointments were made to state boards, commissions, and county offices.

BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

In 2021, Governor Parson and Team 57 celebrated the bicentennial of the state and 150 years of the Missouri Governor's Mansion. Governor and First Lady Teresa Parson were able to celebrate this milestone for the state. They toured Missouri and visited communities all across the state and witnessed their individual contribution to Missouri's rich history. They went from the Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site in St. Louis to the Hubble Space Telescope in Marshfield, from Walt Disney's hometown of Marceline to Jesse James's birthplace in Kearney, from the birthplaces of John J. Pershing in Laclede to Mark Twain in Hannibal. They even saw Maxie the Goose in small-town Sumner. After more than forty-five stops, they were blessed to have experienced the history, tradition, and heart and soul of what makes Missouri great. Faith, family, neighbors helping neighbors—that's who Missourians are and what makes Missouri the best state in the United States.

Governor and First Lady Parson hosted the Missouri Bicentennial Parade and Inaugural Ball as well. The historic parade included more than one hundred entries that proudly showcased communities all across Missouri, including the Lincoln University Marching Musical Storm, the Budweiser Clydesdales, Chinese Dragon Dancers, and the Negro League Baseball Museum. Additionally, all Missouri professional sports championship trophies were displayed in the rotunda of the state capitol for people to view.

It also marked the first time in state history that an inaugural ball was held outside. Governor and First Lady Parson counted themselves fortunate to be able to celebrate with thousands of Missourians, many of whom had never experienced such an event.



Governor and First Lady Parson wave to the crowd during the Missouri Bicentennial Inaugural Parade in Jefferson City on September 18, 2021.



Governor Parson speaks at the Walt Disney Hometown Museum in Marceline on his bicentennial tour on July 12, 2024.



Governor Parson delivers remarks in the governor's office during a press conference in support for the strongest pro-life bill in Missouri's history on May 15, 2019.

STANDING FOR THE UNBORN

As other states like New York and Virginia ventured further away from the American ideal to protect and uphold the right to life, Governor Parson led in a state where many citizens remained committed to standing up for those who could not protect themselves. Starting in 2005 during his time in the state legislature, Governor Parson promised to help protect and promote a culture of life. He was proud to follow through on that promise by casting supporting votes on a number of pro-life policies. Thanks to decades of conservative, pro-life leadership, Missouri hit an all-time low for the number of abortions, going from a high of more than twenty-thousand abortions per year to below three thousand per year. And while this was great news—more and more Missourians choose life—Governor Parson knew the work was not done. In 2019, he signed the Right to Life of the Unborn Child Act, which was included in House Bill 126 and contingent upon the US Supreme Court overruling *Roe v. Wade* in whole or in part.

“ Thanks to decades of conservative leaders, Missouri has become one of the most pro-life states in the nation, and our Administration has always fought for the life of every unborn child. Today, our efforts have produced what generations of Missourians have worked and prayed for: Today, we have won our fight to protect innocent life. ”

—Governor Parson

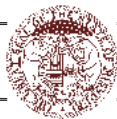
On June 24, 2022, in response to the US Supreme Court’s ruling overturning *Roe v. Wade*, Governor Parson signed a proclamation giving legal effect to Section 188.017 RSMo and activating the Right to Life of the Unborn Child Act. The act prohibited doctors from performing abortions except in a medical emergency. Under Governor Parson’s leadership, Missouri became the first state in the union to ban abortion. As the fight to protect innocent lives continued, victories, such as *Blackmon v. State*, demonstrated the resolve of Missouri against pro-abortion advocates. When Governor Parson first came to Jefferson City, nearly eight thousand elective abortions were performed annually. When Governor Parson left office, that number stood at zero, cementing his legacy as Missouri’s most pro-life governor.



Governor and First Lady Parson pose for a photo in front of the Missouri Governor’s Mansion during the Midwest March for Life rally in Jefferson City on February 1, 2020.



Governor Parson is briefed on the devastating effects of recent flooding during a meeting with community members from Atchison and Holt Counties on March 21, 2019.



CHAPTER TWO

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

“Whether it was the duck boat crisis, floods, drought, tornadoes, civil unrest, train derailments, or in 2020, when a global pandemic came knocking at our doors – a crisis that came with no roadmap or playbook – we never backed down or passed the buck.”

—Governor Parson

Leadership is tested in times of crisis. True leadership faces these crises head on, never allowing the circumstances, no matter how serious, to cloud long-term vision.

During the early days of his administration, Governor Parson hit the ground running, dealing with both a natural disaster and a tragic accident at Table Rock Lake within a mere few weeks of taking office. From then on, there was no turning back. As a result, Governor Parson led the state’s response to nine federally declared disasters, including COVID-19, numerous storms, tornadoes, droughts, and historic flooding in 2019 and 2022.

FOUR HISTORIC DROUGHTS

**(January 1–November 1, 2018; July 1, 2020–February 1, 2021;
June 28, 2022–March 1, 2023; May 31, 2023–September 1, 2024)**

Just forty-eight days after taking office, Governor Parson signed Executive Order 18–05, calling upon the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to activate a drought assessment committee and associated drought impact teams. The severe lack of rain, especially in northern Missouri, was taking its toll on agriculture. In response to worsening drought conditions

throughout the state, Governor Parson soon announced the availability of emergency water for livestock, hay access, and a free lottery for Missouri farmers interested in haying almost nine hundred acres of state park land. Up to five thousand gallons of water were made available for family farms at twenty-nine Department of Conservation (MDC) areas and five DNR state parks.

The 2018 drought impacted a number of water systems in north-central Missouri. The cities of Hamilton and Cameron and the communities served by the North Central Missouri Regional Water Commission in Milan were hit exceptionally hard. These three public water systems relied on surface water as their primary source, and all had seen severe reductions to the available pool in their reservoirs.



On August 24, 2018, Governor Parson meets with northwest Missouri cattle farmers at a lake outside Cameron to discuss his commitment of state resources to ease the impacts of the drought.

Through the work of the Drought Assessment Committee, the state was able to provide financial and technical assistance to these areas to help them identify and implement solutions to abate their emergency situations. These solutions included above-ground water transmission lines, emergency water interconnections, and funding to improve the infrastructures of impacted areas to increase drought resilience. The DNR also made emergency grants

and loans available to affected community public water systems in counties identified by Executive Order 18–05.

Reservoir Projects Tackle Drought

In response to the 2018 droughts, Governor Parson and the general assembly approved the Multipurpose Water Resource Fund to provide nearly \$30 million in funding to support water supply development projects. In 2018, Caldwell and Sullivan Counties, counties especially susceptible to drought, were weeks away from losing all drinking water service. As a result, two reservoir projects were approved to provide water supply stability and ensure similar issues didn't occur again.

Little Otter Creek Reservoir

The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) issued a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit, which Governor Parson's administration certified, to create the Little Otter Creek Reservoir. The 345-acre reservoir will provide drinking water to more than nine thousand citizens in Caldwell County, while providing an additional destination for outdoor enthusiasts and recreational activities.



Young community members join Governor and First Lady Parson during a ground-breaking ceremony for the Little Otter Creek Reservoir in Caldwell County on March 19, 2021. From left: Commissioner Rex Hibler, Commissioner Jonathan Abbot, First Lady Parson, Governor Parson, Representative Randy Railsback, and Commissioner Bud Motsinger.

Roy Blunt Reservoir

The Roy Blunt Reservoir, measuring some 2,350 acres, will provide regional water supply, flood control, and recreation for ten counties in north-central Missouri. In addition to state support, the Sullivan County project received an additional \$46 million from the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Development program to help finance and ensure its completion.

2022–2023 Drought

When drought conditions reoccurred in 2022, the lottery system was replaced with haying offered on a first-come first-served basis. After a brief reprieve through the end of the year, a drought was again declared in March 2023. In response, Governor Parson promoted the use of Condition Monitoring Observer Reports, a nationwide tool allowing citizens to submit observation reports relating to drought, which are then presented in a map that can be used to view and access submitted information and attachments. Team members with the DNR Water Resources Center traveled to drought-impacted areas to listen to residents' concerns.

One innovation launched during the 2023 drought was the implementation of the state's new drought plan which improved upon the 2002 drought plan by using modern tools for enhanced monitoring and assessment of all types of droughts. These enhancements included remote sensing of rainfall amounts and satellite measurements of soil moisture. The plan was also designed to rapidly assess what areas of the state are most affected by drought as well as what industries are most susceptible or at risk under different conditions. A comprehensive list of actions and initiatives further outlined what measures can be taken at all levels before and during drought by everyone from government officials to water suppliers and water users. Additionally, a weekly Missouri Drought System Response map began to be posted online to further guide actions by the public and state institutions.

BRANSON DUCK BOAT TRAGEDY

On July 19, 2018, a sightseeing "duck boat" capsized and sank on Table Rock Lake near Branson, Missouri, due to high winds from approaching thunderstorms. Of the thirty-one passengers on board, seventeen lost their lives. Immediately, Governor Parson traveled to the Branson area to meet with survivors, victims' relatives, rescuers, and emergency responders.

The governor directed all state resources necessary to assist with the accident investigation led by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the US Coast Guard. Members of the Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP) Dive Team responded to Table Rock Lake to search for missing victims. Over a period of five days, divers recovered six victims, the sunken vessel, numerous personal items, and evidence in about eighty-five feet of water. Because four of the ten members of the patrol's dive team had recently undergone specialized dive training and certification, the patrol members were capable of diving deeper depths for longer periods of time. This response helped bring closure to families whose loved ones had been lost in the worst civilian duck boat disaster in US history.

The duck boat that sank on Table Rock Lake had an overtop canopy, and state troopers found no one aboard was wearing a life jacket. Thanks to the help of Governor Parson's advocacy with Missouri's federal legislators concerning the need for stricter safety regulations on duck boats, Congress passed such legislation four years after the accident. As a result, boats must now follow requirements set by the NTSB, including mandated use of life jackets, increased buoyancy standards, and the removal of boat canopies that made it difficult for passengers to escape.

HISTORIC FLOODS

Flood of 2019

In 2019, intense flooding across much of Missouri resulted in the devastation of agricultural land, homes, businesses, and public infrastructure. This led to two federal major disaster declarations, one of which included over two-thirds of Missouri counties.

In the spring, sixteen Missouri counties were included in a public assistance federal disaster declaration for the period March 11 to April 16 that resulted in over \$25 million in damage to public infrastructure. Northwest Missouri was heavily impacted with the closure of major roadways, including I-29. Portions of Rockport, Langdon, and areas west of I-29 were also advised to evacuate.

Atchison County was among the first areas in Missouri hard hit by the 2019 flooding. There were two confirmed levee breaches by March, one forty feet in size and another twenty feet, along with several other areas of significant deterioration. The rapid rise of the Missouri River also forced many farmers and families living in the floodplain to make tough decisions about what could be saved before being submerged in up to a dozen feet of water. Once the crest receded, many of those same farmers found once-



Governor Parson surveys extensive flood damage in northeast Missouri on March 15, 2019.

fertile fields were left covered in thick sand deposits and debris ranging from railroad ties to propane tanks. By the end of the flooding, Atchison County alone would record nineteen total levee breaches.

In Holt County, many homes and businesses were inundated with six to seven feet of water. Craig, Missouri, a town of about 220 people, was evacuated, including one couple rescued by helicopter. The MSHP rescued four people from homes and three people from a stranded boat where a temporary levee failed. Over 1.2 million acres of farmland were inundated, threatening stockpiled grain and killing livestock. Most of the 130 residents in Lewis and Clark Village in Buchanan County evacuated along with parts of the city of St. Joseph after the Missouri River reached historic levels on March 22, 2019. Evacuations were necessary for areas behind the L-455 levee system in Missouri.

In July, the second federal disaster of 2019 was declared and later expanded to include eighty-two of Missouri's 114 counties and the independent City of St. Louis for the period of April 29 to July 5. This was the most counties declared in a Missouri disaster since the Great Flood of 1993. In addition to over \$79 million in federal and state assistance for emergency response costs and repairs and replacement of public infrastructure, this disaster included

nearly \$7.5 million in direct assistance to almost 1,500 Missouri homeowners and renters in twenty-six counties approved for individual assistance.

Though river levels receded slightly after spring flooding, both the Missouri and Mississippi River Basins received rainfall that was 200–300 percent above normal. Many locations had remained in flood stage since March, causing significant strain on area levees and setting the stage for long-term, major flooding. From May into June, Missouri experienced historic or near-historic flooding with many river sites reaching levels just under that from the Great Flood of 1993. Nine fatalities occurred as a result of this weather system, six of which were flooding deaths. Governor Parson activated the Missouri National Guard (MONG) to assist communities across the state with response needs, including sandbagging efforts near the Grand River in Chariton County where water levels were expected to exceed thirty-two feet—the second-highest level on record.

One of the state agencies that rose to the occasion was the Missouri Department of Corrections (DOC). Supervised by staff working extra hours outside their usual shifts, more than 350 volunteer offenders from Missouri prisons contributed 1,548 work days to flood relief, filling and placing sandbags to save towns such as New Franklin, St. Joseph, Norborne, Brunswick, Kimmswick, Clarksville, Craig, Hardin, and Henrietta that were threatened by rising flood waters. Staff throughout the state also donated money, time, and resources to help Missourians affected by tornadoes and floods.



Governor Parson speaks during a Missouri River flood response roundtable with emergency management personnel from St. Louis County, St. Charles County, Pike County, Lewis County, and Clark County on May 8, 2019.



Governor Parson and Clarksville Mayor Jo Anne Smiley assess flood damage down Howard Street on June 3, 2019.



In 2019, 350 volunteer offenders from the Women's Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center in Vandalia contributed 1,548 work days to flood relief, filling and placing sandbags to save Clarksville (pictured) and other towns threatened by rising waters.

Throughout 2019, locations on the Missouri River were above flood stage for nearly 280 days, well surpassing the duration of both the 1993 and 2011 floods. More than one hundred levees overtopped or breached and approximately 470 roads were closed.

Governor Parson knew Missouri could not continue to rely on the same patchwork responses of the past. As a result, he signed Executive Order 19-14 establishing Missouri's Flood Recovery Advisory Working Group to provide input on the state's short-, medium-, and long-term flood recovery priorities, including suggested changes to Missouri's levee system. Additionally, in conjunction with the governors of Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska, Governor Parson spearheaded the expansion of the working group to include a four-state coalition. The goal was to develop actions with USACE to reduce system risk and recurring damages, improve system resiliency for the future, and improve interagency collaboration.

Governor Parson's Flood Recovery Advisory Working Group, along with stakeholders, laid the groundwork to suggest and prioritize much needed changes to the state's current levee system. One of the first major projects undertaken by the state and recommended by the four-state coalition was



On April 8, 2021, Governor Parson alongside Governor Kim Reynolds of Iowa and Governor Pete Ricketts of Nebraska discuss disaster recovery progress and prevention following the 2019 flooding along the Lower Missouri Basin.

the Atchison County L-536 levee setback project. This \$100 million levee setback was the largest project on the lower Missouri River in many years.

The State of Missouri provided 75 percent of the cost share to rebuild levees impacted by the 2019 flood, an unprecedented move to reduce delays by the federal government and get the project up and running faster. Damages to the L-536 in Atchison County included fifty-six thousand acres underwater, 121 miles of destroyed roads, and the flooding of 1,295 agricultural buildings, fourteen commercial businesses, and 166 homes. Additionally, an estimated \$25 million in agricultural revenue was lost. A USACE cost analysis determined it would be more efficient and more cost effective to realign the south part of the levee rather than repair it in place.

During the restoration efforts on L-536, many of the farmers initially impacted by the floods were hired by the USACE prime contractor to help with the construction of the realignment. At one point, nearly 70 percent of the equipment operators working on the recovery efforts were local farmers and landowners.

The project, which began in May 2020, restored the levee to its full pre-flood height just ten months later. Almost five miles in length, the realigned portion of the levee reconnected approximately 1,100 acres of floodplain and created more wetlands habitat. The Atchison County levee setback project not only provided more capacity to convey floodwaters without restricting flow, but it also provided a successful guide to the benefits that can be gained with strong local leadership and partners committed to a shared goal. Using the L-536 project as a guide, Missouri leaders started meeting with local levee boards, county officials, and USACE to discuss potential planning efforts to bring increased flood protection to Brunswick, Holt County, and Jefferson City.

To continue improving the infrastructure necessary for farmers, ranchers, and rural Missourians to get their goods and services to market, Governor Parson signed the fiscal year 2025 budget bills on June 28, 2024, approving an additional \$5 million for Lower Missouri River Flood Resiliency efforts.

Flood of 2022

In July 2022, severe storms and record rainfall led to catastrophic flash flooding across the St. Louis region, devastating families, homes, and businesses that had never experienced such flooding before.

St. Louis Lambert International Airport recorded 9.07 inches of rainfall from July 25 to July 26, the highest twenty-four-hour rainfall total in the history of St. Louis since records began in 1874. Of the 9.07 inches, 7.68

inches fell in just six hours, considered to be a one-in-one-thousand-year rainfall event. To add perspective, the average regional rainfall for July and August combined is 7.31 inches. St. Louis surpassed that amount in just six hours. Several surrounding locations received even more rain, including St. Peters at 12.86 inches, Creve Coeur at 11.44 inches, Flint Hill at 11.03 inches, and St. Ann at 10.95 inches. Many major interstates were closed, numerous businesses and homes were inundated, hundreds of water rescues were performed, and, sadly, two people lost their lives.

Just one day later, a second flooding event occurred in the St. Louis metro. Though rainfall amounts were substantially less than the previous system, rain fell at a rate of four to six inches per hour. With grounds already heavily saturated from previous rains, substantial runoff into the city's drains, creeks, and streams necessitated swift water rescues from flooded homes and businesses. The state responded quickly, coordinating with its partners to establish eight Multi-Agency Resource Centers (MARC)s in ten days across the St. Louis area. These MARCs provided disaster recovery resources and assistance to 7,479 individuals from 2,708 households, the most individuals served since MARCs became standard practice following the 2011 Joplin tornado.

Governor Parson worked with the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency to prepare and submit a major federal disaster declaration request in record time. This request was approved by the president on August 8,



On August 1, 2022, Governor Parson addresses the media with local officials in University City regarding the state's response to historic flooding in the St. Louis region.

2022, just ten days after the initial incident. This declaration made Federal Emergency Management Agency Individual Assistance available to residents in the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, and St. Charles County, obligating more than \$51.8 million to over fourteen thousand claimants—the costliest individual assistance declaration in Missouri since 2011.

DESTRUCTIVE TORNADOES

Shortly before midnight on May 22, 2019, an EF-3 tornado cut a thirty-three-mile swath of destruction from Eldon, Missouri, northward to the heart of Jefferson City. Thankfully, there were no fatalities, but numerous homes and businesses were severely damaged or destroyed. Two state buildings damaged by the tornado were the Career Center in Eldon and the Employment Security Building, which housed employees of the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Economic Development (DED) in Jefferson City.



Governor Parson and Miller County Sheriff's Deputy Joshua Wilson discuss recovery efforts in Eldon, after a series of tornadoes damaged multiple areas of the state overnight, on May 23, 2019.



Governor Parson looks on as a Jefferson City resident describes living through the EF-3 tornado overnight and the damage it caused on May 23, 2019.

Governor Parson called on state agencies to quickly resume operation and continue providing critical services to Missourians. The Information Technology Services Division (ITSD) immediately began relocating eighty-four DED and thirty-eight DSS staff members whose work areas were affected. PCs, monitors, printers, etc. were removed from the debris before sustaining further damage from the elements. Key services continued without interruption. That same night an EF-0 tornado killed three people in Golden City in Barton County.

CIVIL UNREST

On May 31, 2020, in response to demonstrations across the country in the wake of the killing of George Floyd in Minnesota, Governor Parson signed Executive Order 20-11 declaring a state of emergency in Missouri due to civil unrest.

Citizens have the right to peacefully assemble and protest, and the State of Missouri is committed to protecting the lawful exercise of these rights. Despite the many peaceful assemblies across the country, many demonstrations were escalating into violence and created distress and threats to public safety. The MONG and MSHP stood ready to support local authorities in the protection of life and property. Thanks to a proactive approach, escalations into violence were not seen in Missouri as in other states.

VIOLENT CRIME

In 2020, Missouri began seeing rapid increases in violent crime rates, primarily in the state's urban areas. In St. Louis, by fall 2020, homicides had already surpassed 2019 homicides, putting the state on track to have its deadliest year on record. To better understand the issues in Missouri's high-crime areas, Governor Parson traveled across the state to meet with community members as well as leaders of numerous organizations on the frontlines, including the Urban League of St. Louis, Ecumenical Leadership Council, Missouri Clergy Coalition, and Better Family Life, among many others.



Governor Parson announces a \$1 million grant to the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis Inc. for the expansion of the Serving Our Streets Initiative flanked by members of ULSTL, Area Resources for Community and Human Services, and Missouri FACT during a press conference on September 9, 2020.

Governor Parson also worked closely with the mayors of Missouri's four largest metro areas—Kansas City, St. Louis, Springfield, and Columbia—to discuss the issues and develop potential solutions. A result of this collaboration was Governor Parson's commitment of an additional twenty-five state personnel to address violent crime in St. Louis. The MSHP surged troopers to St. Louis interstates and personnel supported the Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Task Force, US Marshals Fugitives Task Force, Missouri SAVE (Strike Against Violence Early) Task Force, US Attorney's Office, and Probation and Parole Police partnerships.

Operation LeGend

Operation LeGend was a federal partnership with local law enforcement to address the increase in homicides and violent crime in Kansas City beginning on July 8, 2021. The operation honored the memory of four-year-old LeGend Taliferro, one of the youngest victims during a record-breaking year of homicides and shootings. Additional federal agents were assigned to the operation from the FBI; Drug Enforcement Administration; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; and the US Marshals Service.

The MSHP provided multiple investigators, crime analysts, and aircraft support during the operation. On August 13, 2020, Ryson Ellis, a twenty-two-year-old from Kansas City, was arrested in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and charged with the murder of LeGend Taliferro.

Tim Garrison, US attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced through September 16, 2020, authorities made 518 arrests in Kansas City under the purview of Operation LeGend. Among those arrested, thirty-three were homicide cases and sixty-two were fugitives with either state or federal warrants. The remaining non-fugitive arrests were either probation violators or were referred for prosecution in state court.

The success of Operation LeGend in Kansas City prompted expansion to St. Louis. The MSHP Division of Drug and Crime Control had three investigators assigned to Operation LeGend for approximately two months. Two were assigned to the US Marshals and one was assigned to the FBI. Additionally, MSHP Troop C provided numerous personnel to assist with serving arrest warrants. This included both road and SWAT personnel.

Public Safety Actions

To build on successful violent crime prevention task forces, Governor Parson signed House Bills 66 and 46 into law, which were passed by the general assembly during a special session on violent crime called by the governor in July 2020.

House Bill 66 created the Pretrial Witness Protection Fund in which law enforcement agencies can provide resources for the security of victims, witnesses, and their immediate families. House Bill 46 removed the residency requirements for public safety employees in the City of St. Louis. At the time of signing, the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department had a shortfall of 140 officers.

In June 2020, Governor Parson also challenged the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission to take a leading role in advancing the training Missouri provides law enforcement officers and helps



Governor Parson ceremonially signs House Bill 66 at the Greene County Public Safety Center in Springfield on September 22, 2020.

improve community relations. The POST Commission followed through, voting to require annual training for all officers in de-escalation techniques and recognizing implicit bias for all Missouri law enforcement officers. Beginning in 2022, Missouri officers were required to complete a one-hour course in each area as part of their required twenty-four hours of annual continuing education training.

COUNTY JAIL REIMBURSEMENTS

In Missouri, county governments are reimbursed for costs associated with housing felony offenders in county jails before being transferred to DOC facilities. In 2018, the state had accumulated a backlog of nearly \$33 million in reimbursement payments. Having run a county jail, Governor Parson understood the financial strain this backlog created for county sheriffs and recommended an additional \$43 million for fiscal year 2019 and \$43 million for fiscal year 2020, helping to clear the backlog and reimburse current costs. In addition, the implementation of an online system significantly improved efficiency and effectiveness in the process. Counties were given the option to file their claims and track their status online, eliminating the need for paper-based processes, reducing processing time and improving customer service.

SECURING THE SOUTHERN BORDER

After joining fourteen fellow Republican governors in Texas to see firsthand the chaos at the Southern Border, on February 20, 2024, Governor Parson announced the State of Missouri would provide up to two hundred MONG members and twenty-two MSHP troopers to support Texas Governor Greg Abbott's Operation Lone Star mission at the Southern Border.

I have visited the Southern Border and let me not mince words when I say it is a crisis. The crisis at the Southern Border is fueling the fentanyl crisis here in our state. Missourians are dying; families are being ripped apart; communities are being destroyed; and Missouri children are falling victim. It all stems from the Biden Administration's reckless, irresponsible, and failing open-border policies. With our Southern Border wide open, every state is now a border state. Missouri will act by deploying our own resources to secure our nation's border.

—Governor Parson

Governor Parson issued Executive Order 24-03 to activate the MONG and the governor's office's discretionary emergency response fund. Governor Parson's plan to support border security along the Texas-Mexico border included deploying the MONG on a rotating basis of approximately thirty days and sending MSHP troopers, all of whom volunteered for the mission, accompanied by standard law enforcement equipment.

A \$2.3 million supplemental budget request was made to the Missouri General Assembly to support border security efforts and backfill the governor's office's emergency response fund. Governor Parson signed the supplemental budget (House Bill 2016) into law at the Southern Border on the banks of the Rio Grande River on May 8, 2024.

With the help of Missouri and other states across the country, Operation Lone Star apprehended over 513,100 illegal immigrants and arrested more than 43,700 criminals with more than 38,400 felony charges. In the fight against the fentanyl crisis, law enforcement seized over 488 million lethal doses of fentanyl—enough to kill every man, woman, and child in the United States and Mexico combined—during the border mission.

From March 15 through June 13, MONG soldiers were stationed near Eagle Pass, Texas, and were directly involved in reducing daily illegal immigrant encounters from more than four thousand to less than three hundred. MONG soldiers also assisted in the capture of five individuals on the terrorist watch list.

MONG soldiers worked daily with their Texas Army National Guard counterparts and border patrol to expand their presence and deter migrant activity within their sixty square miles of operations on the Rio Grande River, near Eagle Pass. In addition to their surveillance operation duties, Missouri soldiers assisting Texas Army National Guard members in the area of the US border provided assistance with 2,400 undocumented migrant surrenders and one thousand undocumented migrant detections and turn-backs.

Governor Parson stands with Missouri National Guard Adjutant General Levon Cumpton near Eagle Pass, Texas, on May 8, 2024, during MONG's Southern Border deployment in support of Texas Governor Greg Abbott's Operation Lone Star mission to secure the Texas–Mexico border.



From March 3 through April 15, MSHP troopers assisting Texas DPS troopers in the area of the US border provided assistance with the following incidents/encounters:

- 1,432 traffic stops
- 519 undocumented migrants
- Sixty-one undocumented migrant turn-backs
- Sixty-nine impaired driver and drug arrests
- 105 other law enforcement assists

HISTORIC ACTIVATION FOR THE MISSOURI NATIONAL GUARD		
The total days on State Emergency Duty (SED) includes overlapping dates where there was more than one SED (i.e. COVID-19 alongside hazardous weather response).		
Administration	Number of SEDs	Length in days
Blunt	15	168
Nixon	16	414
Greitens	5	87
Parson	13	1,306





Mere weeks before COVID arrived in Missouri, Governor and First Lady Parson wave to crowds during the Super Bowl LIV victory parade for the Kansas City Chiefs on February 5, 2020.



CHAPTER THREE

COVID

2020: A CRISIS EMERGES

At the beginning of 2020, a spirit of confidence and optimism prevailed throughout Missouri. During the first few weeks of the year, Governor Parson celebrated the passage of the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA), which would benefit Missouri workers, small-business owners, and the primary economic driver in the Show Me State—agriculture. All three major credit rating agencies affirmed Missouri's AAA status. This led to a proposal by the governor to establish a Cash Operating Expense Fund (COEF) to strengthen the state's financial health and provide greater flexibility and security in times of economic downturn or declared disaster. And the Kansas City Chiefs soundly defeated (31–20) the San Francisco 49ers in Super Bowl LIV. However, it would not be long before the focus on the future of Missouri and all of America would be placed on the beginnings of a pandemic called COVID-19 caused by the outbreak of a novel coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2.

Realizing the potential risks this disease presented, on January 28, 2020, Governor Parson proactively met with Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) Director Dr. Randall Williams to discuss the coronavirus and the steps the state should take to monitor it. During a March 7, 2020, press conference held immediately after the Missouri State Public Health Laboratory reported its first presumptive positive result for COVID-19, the governor put an all-hands-on-deck initiative in motion to face whatever challenges that may arise.

By mid-March, Governor Parson participated in two conference calls with Vice President Mike Pence and governors from other states to strategize how to combat what was becoming a national crisis.



On March 3, 2020, Governor Parson participates in a briefing with key cabinet and public health officials to discuss precautionary measures underway ahead of Missouri's first confirmed case of COVID-19.

Decisive Actions

After three more presumptive positive cases were reported in Missouri, the governor held a press conference announcing Executive Order 20-02, which declared a state of emergency in Missouri. The order also enabled Governor Parson to waive certain state laws and regulations where necessary and directed state agencies to report any unfair market practices. Additionally, a combined total of approximately \$7 million in state funds beyond the federal funds Missouri expected to receive were made accessible.

Realizing the prevailing pandemic was a crisis that would hold Missouri, along with all of America, in its clutches for longer than anyone had hoped, Governor Parson proactively put a plan into action to support the state's economy. Daily press briefings were initiated by the governor to keep Missourians up to date. He directed the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and the Missouri Department of Economic Development (DED) to seek assistance for businesses across the state through the US Small Business Administration's (SBA) Economic Injury Disaster Loan program. This involved offering targeted, low-interest disaster recovery loans for Missouri small businesses that were being severely impacted by economic disruptions related to COVID-19. Immediately after this action, the state's entire congressional delegation wrote, in bipartisan unity, a letter supporting Governor Parson's directive to the SBA.



On March 13, 2020, Governor Parson, flanked by Department of Health and Senior Services officials, declares a state of emergency in Missouri due to an increase in COVID-19 cases.

Executive Order 20–04, signed on the day the first Missouri COVID-19 death was reported in Boone County, also offered regulatory relief by expanding the use of telemedicine and pharmacology to protect doctors and decrease the risk of exposure to both health-care providers and patients. Load capacities for drivers of commercial motor vehicles were enhanced. On the education front, teacher certification provisions in regard to qualifying scores on exit examinations and culminating clinical experience in terms of semester hours, weeks, and number of placements were addressed to ensure the teacher workforce shortage was not exacerbated by the virus.

From the very beginning, Governor Parson encouraged all Missourians to exercise common sense and personal responsibility when faced with COVID-19 and to take extra precautions if they were older or had an underlying health condition that would put them at increased risk. He also encouraged everyone to avoid social gatherings in groups of more than ten people, discretionary travel, shopping trips, and social visits and promoted the continued support of community establishments that offered drive-thru, pickup, and delivery options. However, throughout the crisis Governor Parson never mandated Missouri’s schools, businesses, or churches to close.

“My administration and I are working each and every day to combat COVID-19 and respond accordingly. We are all in this together, and I challenge all Missourians to do their part by exercising social distancing at every opportunity.”
—Governor Parson

In less than two weeks after Governor Parson held his first press conference addressing COVID-19, several statewide initiatives were put in place to keep Missourians updated and educated about the crisis. A hotline was created through DHSS to take and answer questions twenty-four/seven, along with a chatbot for online inquiries. Eventually, DHSS would handle more than one hundred thousand hotline calls during the crisis. Each state department added a link to their websites that would direct people to the DHSS websites regarding the COVID-19 outbreak, and they incorporated a consistent social media plan to help educate Missourians on ways to reduce the risk of contracting the virus.

In response to COVID-19, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) took several steps to ensure its services continued with as little disruption as possible, including working with partners across state government to make it possible for community providers to do much of their work by telephone, rather than the traditional face-to-face requirement. DMH also utilized unique ways to stay in touch with people who could not afford cell phones or extra minutes.

Governor Parson also announced during the press briefing that the Missouri Department of Revenue (DOR) had coordinated with the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) to extend driving privileges another sixty days to individuals with CDL or non-CDL license expiration dates of March 1, 2020, through April 30, 2020. Concurrent extensions were granted for CDL medical certificates, giving Missouri's commercial drivers additional time to complete their required medical exam and to submit an updated medical certificate to their local license office.

The Department of Commerce and Insurance (DCI) processed over one hundred waivers to state statutes and regulations to allow Missouri licensed professionals in multiple fields to continue their work and provide

increased assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. All told, throughout the pandemic, Governor Parson approved over six hundred waivers to statutes and regulations in order to increase flexibility in response efforts.

On March 26, 2020, President Donald Trump approved the governor's request for a federal major disaster declaration for the state of Missouri. As a result, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance Program could be utilized to reimburse eligible expenditures made by local governments, nonprofit organizations, and the state for emergency protective measures by first responders and others responding to the coronavirus. Earlier that week, Governor Parson's request for low-interest federal disaster loans for Missouri small businesses suffering substantial economic injury due to COVID-19 was approved by the SBA.

APRIL 2020

On the first day of April 2020, in response to increasing concerns of economic downturn due to COVID-19, the governor announced \$180 million in expenditure restrictions to secure a balanced state budget and the necessary funds to combat COVID-19 going forward. Following the governor's lead, the Missouri judiciary and secretary of state also worked to identify savings in their own budgets that were able to be restricted.

"Up until this point in my administration, we have been very fortunate to have a booming economy with record low unemployment and high wage growth. Incomes have gone up, and taxes have gone down," Governor Parson said. "We have, at many times, had more jobs available than people to fill them. Because of this, we have been able to focus on skilling-up our workforce and making necessary investments in infrastructure." The governor added, "The impact of COVID-19 has already been hard felt in our economy. More people are staying home, business operations have been limited, many people have lost their jobs, and state revenues are down. This has had a serious impact on our anticipated economic growth, so we've had to take a hard look at our budget and make some very difficult decisions."

On April 3, 2020, Governor Parson issued a state "Stay Home Missouri" Order effective from April 6 through April 24. The order implicitly stated that individuals currently residing within the state of Missouri should avoid leaving their homes or places of residence unless necessary. At the time, Missouri had 2,113 positive COVID-19 cases out of 24,727 tested in a total population of six million Missourians, indicating 8.5 percent of those tested had been positive. Over half of the total positive cases were in the St. Louis region. The state also reported nineteen COVID-related deaths thus far.

Governor Parson was committed to removing barriers to keep Missourians moving forward during this time. On April 6, 2020, he announced Executive Order 20–08, suspending a statutory requirement that a notary public must conduct the notarization of official documents while the signer appears personally in front of him or her. This action ensured Missourians could enter into contracts, sign mortgages, and update wills and personal health-care directives without placing themselves or their notary at risk. Missouri was the first state to utilize established fire codes to help determine social distancing requirements for essential services, such as grocery stores, gas stations, and banks, which became a model across other states and local jurisdictions.

Three days later, Governor Parson announced all Missouri public and charter school buildings would remain closed to in-person instruction through the remainder of the academic year after all had voluntarily ceased in-person operations.

In April, the governor announced Missouri was moving forward with its first alternate care site to assist hospitals in the St. Louis region treating an increased number of COVID-19 patients. If necessary, the Florissant site could accommodate more than one hundred people and be used to house individuals who test positive for COVID-19 with mild or no symptoms as well as individuals exposed to COVID-19 and identified and referred by health-care professionals as requiring treatment but not hospitalization. From the preconstruction process to completion, it took the Missouri National Guard (MONG) just eleven days to convert a hotel in Florissant into a care facility.

Thinking forward to when Missouri would return to a new normal, Governor Parson announced Missouri's Show Me Strong Recovery Plan to safely and gradually reopen the state's economy. The data-driven plan included four main pillars:

- Testing – expand testing capacity and volume in the state
- PPE – expand reserves of personal protective equipment (PPE) by opening public and private supply chains
- Health-care Capacity – continue to monitor and, if necessary, expand hospital and health-care system capacity, including isolation and alternate care facilities for those that cannot self-quarantine at home
- Data – improve the ability to predict potential outbreaks using Missouri's public health data

To help Missouri's health-care workers reduce the chances of contracting COVID-19, Governor Parson announced the launch of a new tool to help health-care providers connect with Missouri manufacturers and suppliers of PPE. This tool, developed by Google, was a joint effort between the state and the Missouri Hospital Association and was created to help manufacturers that had shifted their production to PPE enter the health-care market and connect with buyers. Missouri manufacturers across the state answered the call to help protect health workers, and the state became a national model on how to provide equipment into the hands of those who needed it.

During the last week of April 2020, Governor Parson initiated the deployment of a decontamination system in Missouri to assist with the N95 mask shortage and signed Executive Order 20-09 extending the state of emergency through June 15, 2020.

MAY 2020

The first phase of the Show Me Strong Recovery Plan began on May 4, 2020.

Following in the proactive footsteps of Governor Parson, Pfizer BioTherapeutics Pharmaceutical Sciences announced jointly with the governor on May 7, 2020, that its Chesterfield, Missouri, site would be one of their three initial manufacturing centers of COVID-19 vaccine production.

To encourage physicians to expand testing, especially for vulnerable and at-risk Missourians, Governor Parson announced a series of testing priorities designed to detect and rapidly contain potential COVID-19 outbreaks as the state gradually reopened its economy. The state also worked with local and federal partners as well as private labs to expand the number of test kits, lab capacity, and PPE available statewide to arrange expanded access to testing. Testing capacity, including swab and media tube supply availability, continued to increase throughout Missouri.

One novel Missouri testing program became a new testing standard across the nation. Missouri's Coronavirus Sewershed Surveillance Project was a partnership between the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR), DHSS, Department of Corrections (DOC), DMH, Missouri Department of Public Safety's (DPS) Missouri Veterans Commission (MVC), and researchers from the University of Missouri-Columbia. The project tested domestic wastewater for genetic markers of SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing COVID-19 during the peak of the pandemic. Although sewershed surveillance could not identify the number of individuals currently infected with COVID-19, the results provided regional statistics that aided in tracking the virus's progression and informed public health strategy. More than one hundred



Governor and First Lady Parson tour the newly built COVID-19 unit at CoxHealth South with President and CEO Steven Edwards in Springfield on May 4, 2020.

participating Missouri community water systems were tested. This was the first and one of the largest-scale projects of its kind in the United States.

On May 20, 2020, Governor Parson announced the launch of a new online COVID-19 dashboard containing Missouri-specific data from across the state. The interactive dashboard contained data previously released and updated regularly, including cumulative COVID-19 case and death counts, cases and deaths by county, and demographics such as age and gender. It also listed comprehensive data such as the percent change in case totals at the state and county levels as well as more detailed information on testing and hospitalizations. The dashboard automatically updated as new data became available.

JUNE 2020

Three months into the pandemic, it was evident COVID-19 was taking a relentless toll on the economy nationally, including Missouri. During a June 1, 2020, press briefing, Governor Parson announced \$209 million in

expenditure restrictions in addition to the now more than \$220 million set due to the virus.

“It goes without saying that COVID-19 has had severe impacts on our anticipated economic growth. This is truly unlike anything we have ever experienced before, and we are now expecting significant revenue declines,” Governor Parson said. “We could have never imagined that this is where we would be today, but we’ve had to face the reality of the situation and make some extremely difficult decisions regarding our state budget.”

On June 4, 2020, Governor Parson took security measures to safeguard the election process and protect Missouri voters during COVID-19 by signing Senate Bill 631 into law. This mandated a mail-in absentee ballot would only be an option for voters who specifically requested one. To prevent voter fraud and ballot harvesting, voters were also required to submit a notarized statement under penalty of perjury with their ballot. By requiring a signature verification, this provision reduced the opportunity for individuals to fraudulently cast another voter’s ballot and provided an additional safe, secure, and legal way for Missourians to vote during the pandemic.

In a June 11, 2020, press briefing, Governor Parson announced that Missouri would fully reopen and enter Phase 2 of its Show Me Strong Recovery Plan on June 16. During this second phase, there would be no state health order. All statewide restrictions would be lifted, though local officials would still have the authority to put further rules, regulations, or ordinances in place.

“Here we are today, just over 90 days since our first COVID-19 case in Missouri, and I am proud to say we have overcome all of these challenges and more than met our four pillars to reopen.”
—Governor Parson

JULY 2020

Governor Parson announced new resources as part of the Show Me Strong Recovery Plan, including the Show Me Strong Pledge, Business Recovery Lab, and \$15 million in grant funding to help rebuild Missouri’s tourism industry.



Governor Parson meets with St. Louis area public school officials at Jennings Senior High School to discuss challenges associated with reopening schools amidst the COVID-19 crisis on July 29, 2020.

In an effort to boost food supply resilience by increasing livestock and poultry processing capacity and promoting worker safety in the midst of the COVID-19 public health emergency, more than \$20 million in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds was made available to meat and poultry establishments who employed fewer than two hundred people.

The new Nonprofit Relief and Recovery Grant was established to provide up to \$22 million for Missouri nonprofits assisting communities in response to COVID-19. The grant program was designed to support nonprofits in meeting critical and emergent needs as a result of COVID-19 and to help these organizations maintain their operations despite lower-than-average donations during the pandemic.

AUGUST 2020

As school districts continued to prepare for the upcoming school year, Governor Parson met with school administrators and teachers from across the state to discuss their plans for the upcoming fall and how they were navigating the challenges of COVID-19. Governor Parson believed there was no one-size-fits-all approach. Every school district looked different based on

the needs of its students and community. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and DHSS released updated school reopening guidance addressing more frequently asked questions for the upcoming school year.



On August 12, 2020, Governor Parson addresses educators with Hannibal-LaGrange University, Moberly Community College-Hannibal Campus, and Hannibal School District #60 during a roundtable to discuss school reopening plans.

Governor Parson, cabinet members, state health officials, and community stakeholders were joined by White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx for a discussion at the Missouri Governor's Mansion. Dr. Birx originally introduced the “box-in” testing strategy to Missouri officials during a conference call, which focuses heavily on testing, contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine. State officials aggressively executed this strategy across Missouri, particularly in long-term care facilities. DHSS helped nearly four hundred congregate living facilities implement box-in testing. Since this implementation, Missouri saw a significant decrease in its COVID-19 observed case fatality ratio. During April and May, more than 7 percent of all observed cases each month in Missouri were fatal. In June, that number dropped to less than 2 percent. By August, it was less than half of a percent.

SEPTEMBER 2020

On Thursday, September 3, Governor Parson signed Executive Order 20–14 to continue supporting remote notary services. Twelve days later, he signed Executive Order 20–16 extending the mobilization of MONG through December 30, 2020. This allowed MONG to continue assisting in the state’s COVID-19 response efforts, including COVID-19 testing support, supply and equipment transportation, and meal distribution.

Governor Parson and First Lady Parson tested positive for COVID-19 on September 23. All official and campaign events (Governor Parson was running for reelection in 2020) were canceled until further notice. As a precautionary measure, the governor’s staff was also tested. During this time, the governor felt healthy and was displaying no symptoms, while the first lady had mild symptoms. Proper safety protocols were implemented under the direction of Dr. Randall Williams, DHSS director. During this time, Governor Parson continued to conduct and fulfill all of his roles of state business from the Missouri Governor’s Mansion without interruption.

The State of Missouri expanded its COVID-19 dashboards. The new dashboards, located on the Show Me Strong website, provided Missourians with multiple charts, maps, and measures about COVID-19 and its impact in the state. The state also released revised guidance for long-term care facilities in Missouri that chose to establish an Essential Caregiver program and/or resume general visits either inside or outside the facility.

OCTOBER 2020

Governor Parson announced five Missouri colleges would be grant recipients of over \$5 million in CARES Act Child Care Plan funding to improve the quality and availability of child care and early education programs. The grant recipients would expand child care to serve twenty or more children between the ages of six weeks to five years, with at least 30 percent of the slots reserved for children eligible for child-care subsidy.

On October 2, 2020, the governor urged the MVC to take whatever steps necessary to ensure all Missouri Veterans Homes were fully implementing the policies, protocols, and guidance other long-term care facilities in Missouri complied with in the fight against COVID-19. Data he received raised concerns regarding how well these seven homes were uniformly and systematically operating to prevent and, if necessary, contain COVID-19 outbreaks among their staff and residents.

Governor Parson announced over \$133 million in funding to support critical services in several areas, including nearly \$95 million in CARES

Act funding and \$40 million in general revenue. Nearly \$100 million of these funds would support K–12 and higher education.

Due to the financial impact of COVID-19, the state restricted approximately \$436 million in spending earlier in the year to maintain a balanced budget and the necessary funds to combat the virus moving forward. At the time these budget decisions were made, Missouri’s unemployment rate was projected to be at roughly 16.3 percent. By October, Missouri’s actual unemployment rate was 7 percent—less than half of what was originally projected and lower than the national unemployment rate of 8.4 percent. Additionally, the state’s monthly General Revenue Report showed net general revenue collections for September 2020 increased 3 percent compared to September 2019, increasing from \$917.3 million the previous year to \$944.5 million. As a result, Governor Parson released all previous budget restrictions.



Governor Parson thanks Truman Medical Center staff and physicians during a briefing on Fluidigm testing and enhancing saliva-based COVID-19 testing capability in the Kansas City region on October 15, 2020. Clockwise from bottom left: Dr. Kamani Lankachandra, Chief Health Policy and Government Relations Officer Gerard Grimaldi, Governor’s Communication Director Kelli Jones, Governor Parson, MO HealthNet Director Todd Richardson, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Mark Steele, RN Pam Bean, and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Matthew Gratton.

“As a result of our Show Me Strong Recovery Plan, we are outpacing our projected budget forecast, and we are now in a position to release some of the funding that was restricted earlier this year.”
—Governor Parson

During this time, as research and development of multiple COVID-19 vaccines continued to show promising safety and effectiveness findings, Missouri submitted its plan for administering the impending COVID-19 vaccine to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Missouri’s plan was applauded by the White House and federal government and became a model for other states.

Governor Parson announced \$5 million in CARES Act funding to be divided among Missouri’s six regional food banks to help citizens who continue to rely on food assistance.

NOVEMBER 2020

Governor Parson, DHSS, and DESE announced modifications to Missouri’s K–12 school reopening and operating guidance. Under the updated guidance, proper mask wearing prevented individuals from being identified as close contacts in K–12 schools that had implemented a mask mandate. This meant if both individuals at school—the person diagnosed with COVID-19 and the person exposed to the positive case—had masks on and were wearing them correctly, the individual exposed did not need to be quarantined.

Governor Parson signed Executive Order 20–19 extending the state of emergency in Missouri through March 31, 2021. This allowed continued flexibility in deploying critical resources around the state as well as the continued utilization of the MONG and easing of regulatory burdens to further assist Missouri’s COVID-19 response efforts. He also issued a special session call to address COVID-19 liability concerns. By doing so, he wanted to ensure Missouri business could not be sued if someone were to contract COVID-19 within their facilities.



Governor Parson tours Patriot Medical Devices in Cape Girardeau on November 18, 2020. Patriot Medical Devices was launched in response to the increasing need for personal protection equipment to fight COVID-19 and chose Missouri for its strong business climate.

By the end of November, just eight months after the first recorded COVID-19 case in Missouri, Governor Parson announced the launch of a new vaccine website for Missouri residents. MOStopsCOVID.com (<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/>) began providing Missourians with information regarding the safety of the vaccines, research and production processes, and when they may be eligible for vaccination.

DECEMBER 2020

DHSS and DESE partnered with the Institute for Public Health at Washington University, St. Louis University, and the CDC to better understand the impact of COVID-19 mitigation strategies on transmission of the virus in school settings. Schools participating in this pilot project were identified in St. Charles County, St. Louis County, and Greene County. Participation in the project was completely voluntary for school districts as well as students, families, faculty, and staff in these districts.

Governor Parson announced \$46 million in child-care funding to ensure child-care providers could support the needs of working Missouri families, especially those with low incomes during COVID-19.

On December 14, 2020, Governor Parson announced the first shipments of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines had arrived in Missouri. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine three days earlier, confirming its safety and effectiveness. Missouri's first allotment was 51,675 doses of the Pfizer vaccine. The vaccine was shipped to each of Missouri's twenty-one initial vaccination sites, including hospitals and health-care facilities across the state, and the implementation of Phase 1 of Missouri's COVID-19 vaccine plan began.

“Today is an exciting day for Missouri as we have received the first of many shipments of the COVID-19 vaccine. We have been preparing for many months and will soon begin administering vaccines according to our COVID-19 vaccine plan.”

—Governor Parson

By the end of 2020, Governor Parson and his administration had taken the following actions to respond and adapt to COVID-19 since its outbreak seven months earlier:

- Pulled together the entire cabinet and every state agency to coordinate response efforts
- Convened weekly calls with community leaders and medical experts
- Waived nearly six hundred statutes and regulations to provide more flexibility and safety for Missourians
- Distributed \$520 million in CARES Act funds to local jurisdictions within ten days
- Helped secure over \$11 billion in low-interest loans for Missouri small businesses through the SBA
- Mobilized MONG to assist with a response to COVID-19
- Constructed an alternate care site in eleven days to assist hospitals in the St. Louis region

- Significantly expanded COVID-19 testing to over one hundred thousand tests per week
- Delivered Remdesivir to hospitals across the state of Missouri to treat patients with COVID-19 by injection
- Brought in additional health-care staff to further expand hospital capacity
- Received national recognition for partnering with Google to launch the PPE Marketplace while continuing to expand Missouri's own supply
- Shipped over twenty-two million gowns, eighteen million gloves, eight million surgical masks, five million N95 masks, and one million face shields to frontline health-care providers
- Launched interactive COVID-19 dashboards including public health, economic recovery, and social impact data
- Launched the Show Me Strong Recovery Plan to help Missouri safely and gradually recover from the pandemic
- Was one of the first states in the nation to submit a comprehensive COVID-19 vaccine response plan to the CDC
- Provided more than sixty-six thousand frontline health-care workers and long-term care facility residents and staff an initial dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine

2021: THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

In January 2021, Governor Parson was sworn in to a full term as the fifty-seventh governor of the State of Missouri at the Bicentennial Inauguration. One of the first announcements he made during this new term was the launch of a new COVID-19 vaccination dashboard containing Missouri-specific data submitted by providers from across the state. The interactive dashboard included total doses administered and distinguished the number of Missourians who had received at least one dose, categorizing individual populations by age group, sex, race, and ethnicity. It also listed on a county-level vaccination table the number of those who had received at least one dose.

On March 22, 2021, Governor Parson authorized a transfer of \$300 million in federal Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) from the state treasury into the state's Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund to help keep the balance above the level that would trigger an increase in contribution tax rates for Missouri businesses. Despite the unprecedented rise in unemployment caused by COVID-19, Missouri's economy continued to come back strong as businesses reopened and Missourians got back to work. Much had



Governor Parson receives his COVID-19 vaccination at the Cole County Health Department in Jefferson City on February 10, 2021.

happened since the early days of this pandemic, and Governor Parson believed an increase in taxes was the last thing Missouri employers needed during recovery.

SHOW ME STRONG RECOVERY

Governor Parson signed Executive Order 21–06 establishing the Show Me Strong Recovery Task Force. The purpose of the task force was to study and develop recommendations to submit to the governor by December 31, 2021, on ways to support small businesses, including minority-owned businesses, throughout Missouri. The task force also considered ways to better engage minority-owned businesses through existing economic development tools.

On April 16, 2021, Missouri reached a milestone. According to the state's COVID-19 vaccine dashboard, one-third of all Missourians had received at least one dose of the vaccine. In total, nearly 2.1 million Missourians had initiated vaccination and almost 1.4 million Missourians were fully vaccinated. Data from the CDC showed nearly 42 percent of Missouri's eighteen-and-older population had received at least one dose. Of Missouri's sixty-five-and-older population—some of the most vulnerable Missourians—nearly 60 percent had been fully vaccinated and 72 percent had received at least one dose.



Governor Parson briefs the media with local leaders and public health officials during the Kansas City Mega Vaccination drive-through event at GEHA Field on March 19, 2021.

One of the efforts to move Missouri forward took place on May 11, 2021. In order to address workforce shortages across the state, Governor Parson directed the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DOLIR) to notify the US Department of Labor that Missouri would end participation in all federal pandemic-related unemployment insurance programs effective Saturday, June 12 at 11:59 pm. Governor Parson met with several business owners across the state to discuss economic recovery, and he learned ongoing labor shortages were not a direct result COVID-19 but a result of excessive federal unemployment programs.

As the 2020–2021 school year came to a close, DESE reported the vast majority—over 95 percent—of public school districts offered some form of in-person learning to Missouri students. Additionally, Missouri was ranked among the top five states for the most school districts holding fully in-person learning—all while taking precautions to protect the safety of Missouri’s children without sacrificing their education.

On June 15, 2021, Governor Parson signed House Bill 271 into law, which established greater accountability for local leaders when imposing public health orders and prohibited local COVID-19 vaccine passports. While local officials may encourage all Missourians to get vaccinated against COVID-19, Governor Parson believed it was not the job of the government to force them.

“ While these benefits provided supplementary financial assistance during the height of COVID-19, they were intended to be temporary, and their continuation instead worsened the workforce issues we are facing. It’s time that we end these programs that have ultimately incentivized people to stay out of the workforce. ”

—Governor Parson

After hearing from health-care partners that staffing was one of the biggest challenges they continued to face, Governor Parson announced \$30 million in CARES Act funding to support Missouri’s health-care professionals and system. Additionally, he directed the DHSS to create and execute the contractual framework that would help mitigate the current COVID-19 hospital strain.

The Delta variant of COVID-19, first detected in India in October 2020 and in the United States in February 2021, eventually became the dominant strain globally. Since it posed serious health risks to unvaccinated Missourians, the state took additional actions to provide support and save lives. On August 11, 2021, Governor Parson announced the state would spend \$30 million of federal coronavirus relief funds to bulk up hospital staffing and set up temporary monoclonal antibody (mAb) infusion centers available to high-risk individuals for thirty days in five of the state’s largest counties. These centers were capable of treating up to two thousand people per day.

Under Governor Parson’s leadership, SEMA’s Missouri Disaster Medical Assistance Team (MO DMAT-1) played a pivotal role in the setup, staffing, and management of these infusion sites. MO DMAT-1 administered 1,733 antibody infusions, over fifteen thousand COVID-19 tests, and 19,092 vaccines throughout the pandemic, completing more than 615 total missions and logging 182,390 staff hours. Governor Parson said the mission of these infusion centers was to help relieve hospital strain and health-care worker fatigue as the state moved forward with its efforts to get more Missourians vaccinated.

On August 27, 2021, Governor Parson terminated Executive Order 20–02, ending the state of emergency that had been in effect since March 13, 2020. Upon this termination, Governor Parson issued Executive Order 21–09, which represented a more targeted state of emergency declaration that acknowledged the continued needs of Missouri’s health-care system.

In September, Governor Parson announced his administration would reject the Biden administration’s attempt to enforce an unconstitutional, federal vaccine mandate for Missourians and private businesses. The governor’s office had been in communication with leadership from the Missouri General Assembly and the attorney general’s office to align resources for a pending legal fight. Ultimately, the United States Supreme Court had said that states, not the federal government, are charged with the responsibility to protect public health within states under the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Governor Parson believed the regulation of public health was a state issue and the Missouri General Assembly should have a say in the process.

By mid-October, more than three million Missourians had completed their COVID-19 vaccine series. State data showed vaccinations were making a difference and decreasing viral activity in Missouri. Daily cases were half of what they were a month earlier, and Missouri’s positivity rate had decreased to 6.8 percent. Outbreaks within Missouri long-term care facilities also lessened, and only 139 homes had active COVID-19 cases, down from 229 a month earlier.

“ We have responded to the COVID-19 crisis by providing unprecedented levels of resources and support. Now, we know how to fight this virus and have a solution to ending the pandemic with the vaccine. Today, we are terminating this Executive Order as our situation no longer demands an expansive emergency declaration. ”

—Governor Parson

On October 28, 2021, Governor Parson issued Executive Order 21-10 to protect the individual rights of Missourians against overreaching federal COVID-19 vaccine mandates. Governor Parson believed health decisions should be left to the people to either make their own personal decisions or speak through their elected representatives in the general assembly. As the Biden administration tried to force vaccine mandates, it undermined and denied Missourians their right to make personal health decisions and to speak through their elected representatives.



Governor Parson greets members of the Missouri National Guard at the Callaway County Community Testing Site on November 17, 2021.

“ In Missouri, we never had mandates or forced lockdowns. The main focus of our state of emergency was to provide regulatory flexibility to support and assist Missourians, health care facilities, and businesses and coordinate a COVID-19 response that saved lives and livelihoods. ”

—Governor Parson

On December 30, 2021—658 days after a state of emergency was first declared throughout Missouri due to COVID-19—Governor Parson announced the state of emergency would expire the next day and not be renewed.

STRONGER TOMORROW: THE END OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS

While the COVID-19-related state of emergency ended at the end of 2021, the pandemic as well as state vaccine distribution efforts continued on. However, in March 2022, Governor Parson announced an end to the COVID-19 crisis in Missouri, declaring the COVID-19 pandemic over in Missouri.

A whole-of-government COVID-19 emergency response was taken for more than two years, an effort that responded to the needs of all Missourians during the global pandemic and sustained state operations as more was learned about the novel virus. By March 2022, vaccines, testing resources, and treatments were readily available for all Missourians, and the vast majority of the population had some form of immunity to the virus with more than 75 percent of Missourians being vaccinated, including 94 percent of seniors.

In the previous two years, the state was able to achieve some incredible milestones in responding to COVID-19:

- Testing capacity – More than fourteen million tests performed by public health partners
- Treatment options – More than eighty-one thousand treatment courses distributed by the State of Missouri
- Vaccine availability – More than 8.7 million doses administered by public health partners

In addition to vaccines, testing, and treatment options, which are some of the most effective tools to fight COVID-19, Missouri expanded its capabilities over two years in areas of PPE, hospital capacity, and data collection. These capabilities allowed Missouri to adapt to changing needs regarding COVID-19 in the future.

Beyond health care, throughout the pandemic, Governor Parson's office coordinated with state agencies and industry stakeholders to develop a plan for almost \$3 billion in federal response funds to ensure they were being used efficiently and effectively. More than \$500 million was awarded to

more than seven hundred communities, nonprofits, and businesses to help Missourians recover:

- Broadband infrastructure – \$261 million
- Community revitalization – \$94.2 million
- Industrial site development – \$75 million
- Workforce training – \$30 million
- Local tourism – \$30 million
- Cell towers – \$20 million
- Small business – \$10 million
- Entertainment industry – \$2.3 million
- Nonprofit – \$1.9 million

In 2022, Missouri appropriated more than \$720 million in relief funds to support child-care operations and workforce, including recruitment and retention of child-care staff members:

- Retention grants – Approximately two thousand child-care programs received over \$51 million in relief funds to child-care staff members based on years of employment in their programs.
- Recruitment grants – Approximately six hundred child-care programs requested over \$70 million in relief funds to help pay for the first year of new employees in their programs.

When the crisis was over, Missouri emerged strong, ranking in the top states in the Midwest for how quickly jobs returned to pre-pandemic levels. In April 2020, unemployment climbed to 11.2 percent but by March 2022, Missouri's unemployment rate was 3.7 percent—the same level as before the pandemic. Missouri's unemployment rate would continue to decline to 2.1 percent by June 2022—the lowest rate ever recorded in Missouri history. Because through it all, Governor Parson always focused on getting Missourians into the workforce, not keeping them out.

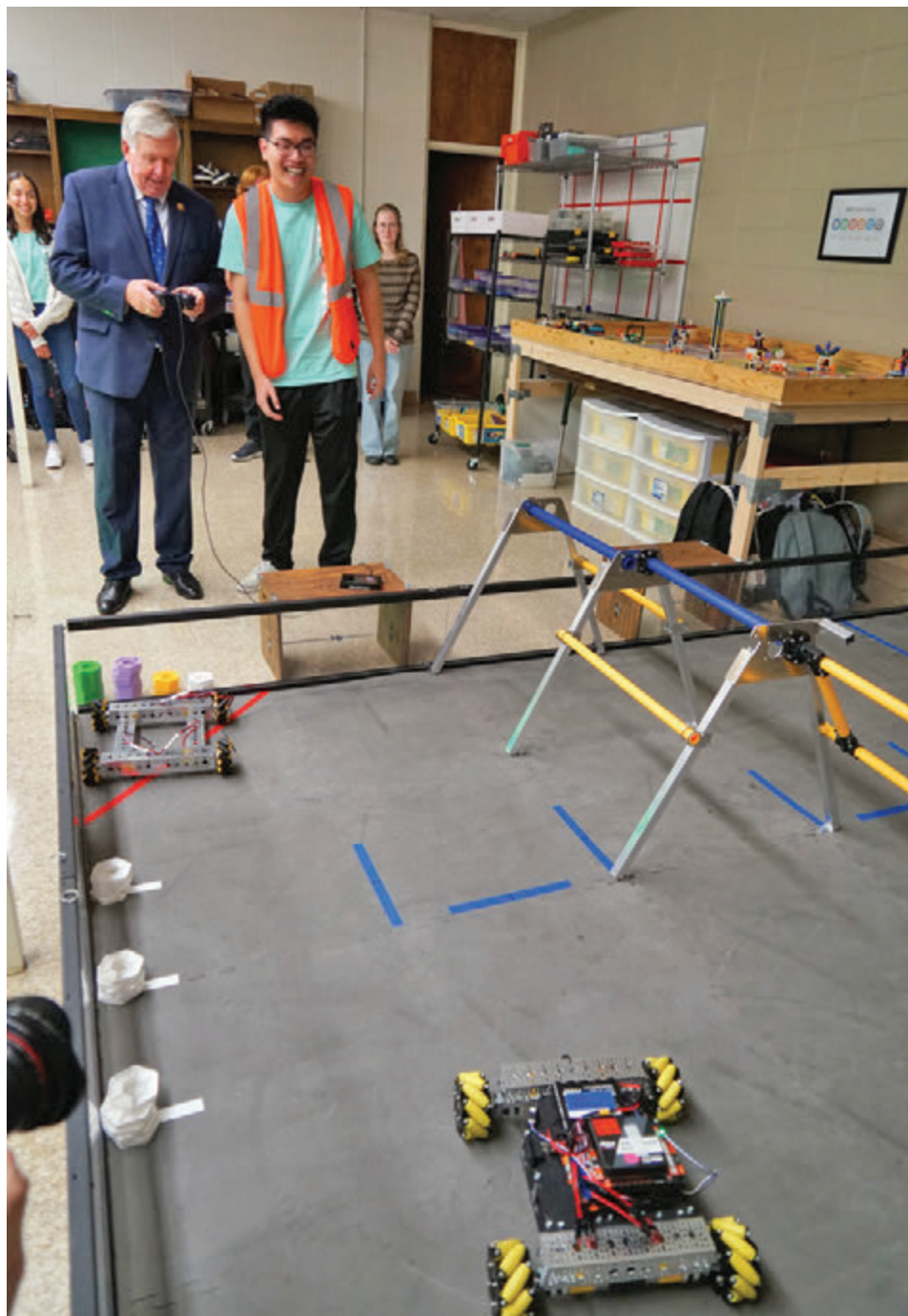
By March 2022, Missouri had recovered nearly 95 percent of the jobs lost to COVID-19 while creating more than ten thousand new jobs and attracting more than \$6 billion in new business investment. Missouri had seen continuous job growth for the past five consecutive months, and during nineteen of the previous twenty-two months, the state created more jobs than it lost. By March, the state had only fifteen thousand people drawing unemployment benefits with more than 150,000 job openings

across the state. Missouri's economy had not only recovered, but it was booming.

However, none of it would have been possible without the efforts Governor Parson's administration took to lessen the impacts of COVID-19. When it started, no one had a road map or a playbook, and Governor Parson knew the state faced difficult times ahead. Nevertheless, state government accepted the challenges and prevailed.

Through all the noise and nonsense and criticism lobbed his way, Governor Parson reminded opponents and proponents alike that Missouri is a diverse state and a one-size-fits-all approach would never work. It is why his administration prided itself in using common sense and always taking a balanced approach. Governor Parson never issued state mandates or forced businesses, schools, or churches to close. His focus was on supporting Missourians to protect their lives and livelihoods. Even after two years of constant crisis, Governor Parson always made the tough decisions and never cowered to the challenge.

“Over the past two years, the people of Missouri have adjusted. They have adapted. And they have prevailed. The COVID-19 crisis is OVER in the State of Missouri, and WE – ARE – MOVING – ON!”
—Governor Parson



During Governor Parson's Springfield visit to Betsy Cannella's award-winning robotics class, Kickapoo High School Senior Ken Do teaches the governor how to drive a robot vehicle on September 22, 2023.



CHAPTER FOUR

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Governor Parson believes a key measure of a thriving state is the ability for Missourians to find and grow a career that can support themselves and their families. Under Governor Parson's administration, Missouri reached the lowest level of unemployment ever recorded at 2.1 percent. Workforce development remained one of two top priorities for the Parson administration throughout his six years in office. From generational investments in early childhood, K-12, and higher education to targeted investments in scholarships, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships, the administration worked to give more Missourians the education and training necessary to fulfill their American Dream.

Keeping the communication lines open between educators, government officials, and the private sector was vital to Governor Parson. He believed it would take everyone working together to improve Missouri's public education system for future generations and the future of the state. Governor Parson wanted to equip the next generation of Missourians with the skills and training they needed to fill high-demand jobs and give individuals a fair shot who are often passed over by employers.

K-12 EDUCATION

One of Governor Parson's very first K-12 related actions was repairing a state board of education left crippled by his predecessor. Upon taking office, he acted quickly to restore and provide functionality to the board. With a quorum once again, the board could fulfill its constitutional duties, which included finding a capable, qualified candidate to serve the Missouri Commissioner of Education. The governor continued to maintain a strong working relationship with the board to help ensure Missouri's nearly nine hundred thousand students received a quality public education.

“I will always be a strong supporter of public education. As a product of public education, the father of a school administrator, and grandfather of a schoolteacher, I know the American Dream could not be possible for so many without a quality education.”

—Governor Parson



Governor Parson reads a book to two young students at Saint Peter Catholic School in Jefferson City on February 20, 2020.

Governor Parson remained a longtime supporter of Missouri educators and during his time in office made historic investments to improve Missouri school districts and the quality of education Missouri children received. Each year, the Parson administration fully funded the Foundation Formula. In total, the administration increased state funding in K–12 education by \$700 million in general revenue since 2018. For the first time in more than two decades, Governor Parson fully funded school transportation with a total increase of \$244.8 million in state funds. This, paired with the administration’s major investments in infrastructure, helped ensure students are able to get to and from school safely.



Governor Parson and First Lady Parson shake hands and give fist bumps to students from Francis Howell Middle School on March 1, 2022.



Governor Parson is interviewed by students from EPIC Elementary School during a visit on October 19, 2022.



ABOVE: Governor Parson recognizes Kirkwood High School for achieving Missouri Gold Star and National Blue Ribbon Schools awards for overall academic performance during a visit to Kirkwood on September 30, 2022.

BELOW: Governor Parson and Commissioner Margie Vandeven visit classrooms at Kickapoo High School in Springfield on September 22, 2023.





Governor Parson poses for a selfie with a culinary arts student from the Nichols Career Center in Jefferson City during a SkillsUSA event on February 7, 2023.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Being in education today isn't an easy job. It is a job that takes many hours of hard work and sacrifice. When Governor Parson took office, Missouri was ranked fiftieth in the United States for starting teacher pay, and half of the state's new teachers were leaving the profession by their fifth year. Governor Parson committed to raising teacher pay, and during his administration, a total of \$98.7 million was invested in baseline educator salary and recommitted to veteran teachers. Under Governor Parson, starting teacher pay increased from \$25,000 per year to \$40,000 per year, making a difference for more than 9,500 teachers thus far. The Career Ladder program has provided additional compensation for tens of thousands of Missouri teachers—21,238 teachers across 207 districts in the 2023–2024 school year alone.

Enabling the certification of substitute teachers through an online training course helped increase the average of certifications from twelve thousand per year to more than eighteen thousand per year. Missouri also became the first state to invest in Grow Your Own programs with \$225,000 for community colleges, \$1.05 million for educator preparation programs, and \$1.25 million for school districts to focus on fostering interest and passion in students who want to become teachers. By investing in Missouri teachers through these programs, educators could better invest in students, which led to more successful outcomes in and outside the classroom. This was about putting people first, both teachers and students.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION EXPANSION

Governor Parson visited several career and technical education (CTE) programs across the state and supported the tremendous work these programs do in teaching Missouri students the skills needed for jobs that are in high demand across the state. Under the Parson administration, CTE programs saw numerous expansions, including:

- 270 new CTE programs
- 68 expanded agriculture education programs
- 226 new career technical student organization chapters
- 15.5 percent increase in industry recognized credentials from 2018 to 2023
- 324 students becoming registered apprentices
- 106 of 115 Missouri counties participating as Certified Work Ready Communities



Governor Parson looks on as a post-secondary trade school student at Grand River Welding Institute in Brookfield demonstrates welding procedures on February 15, 2022.

JOBS FOR AMERICA'S GRADUATES (JAG)

Governor Parson and First Lady Parson served as co-chairs of the JAG–Missouri Board of Directors. JAG is a forty-year-old national nonprofit organization that has helped more than 1.5 million students reach their full potential by ensuring they graduate from high school and are successful at the career of their choosing. JAG graduates overcome significant academic, economic, and social challenges to graduate and enter the workforce. Since 2014, JAG–Missouri's graduation rate has been at or above 98 percent. JAG graduates are also 230 percent more likely to be employed full-time compared to their peers and twice as likely to go to college. Governor Parson also served on the JAG National Board of Directors along with eight other governors. Under the Parson administration, JAG–Missouri grew from six schools serving 225 students across Missouri to 115 programs serving over five thousand students in eighty districts across the state in high school, alternative school, and middle school/junior high settings.

SCHOOL SAFETY GRANTS

While threats of violence are something no one wants to see in Missouri classrooms, Governor Parson believes schools must be prepared and have proper resources and response plans in place. He invested \$70 million in School Safety Grant funding to help ensure schools remain safe environments for Missouri children to learn. School districts and charter schools applied to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) through a competitive grant application process. The grant program supported school safety improvements, including physical security upgrades and associated technology (e.g., door locks, monitoring systems), epinephrine auto-injectors, and automatic external defibrillators. A total of seven hundred school districts, charter schools, and nonpublic schools received grant funds from the School Safety Grant Program.

INVESTING IN EARLY LEARNING

During Governor Parson's administration, child care was a struggle for many parents and businesses. Child-care providers often had to limit their hours due to staffing shortages or increase their prices. This posed a real challenge to parents as they weighed the decision to work or stay home. Prior to COVID-19, more than 50 percent of Missouri residents lived in an area with a shortage of child care, and the problem only worsened with one-third of facilities no longer open after the pandemic. To address this issue, the Parson administration appropriated nearly \$722 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act relief funds to support child-care operations and workforce, including recruitment and retention of child-care staff members. A total of 364 programs received over \$25 million in relief funds to start a new child-care program or add new classrooms in public preschools for a total of approximately 13,750 slots across the state of Missouri. Approximately two thousand child-care programs received more than \$51 million in relief funds to help retain child-care staff members. More than \$70 million in relief funds was allocated to six hundred child-care programs in the form of recruitment grants to help pay for the first year of new employees in their programs. Additionally, the administration increased subsidy rates for child care by \$78.5 million to reflect recent market rate studies. Addressing the supply of child care in Missouri will ultimately allow more women and men to remain in the workforce and reach their full economic potential.

If we are to truly make a difference in a child's life, it starts with early childhood education.

—Governor Parson

At the start of the administration, less than half of all Missouri four year olds were enrolled in an early childhood education program, and approximately 12 percent of those children living at or below the poverty level had access to an early childhood education program through a public or charter school. Under Governor Parson's leadership, Missouri invested \$81.9 million to expand pre-kindergarten options to all low-income Missouri children. Governor Parson also appropriated \$15 million for rate increases to First Steps and Parents as Teachers parent education programs. First Steps provided services to an additional 1,400 children with developmental delays or disabilities. Parents as Teachers provided an additional 6,266 developmental screenings and an additional 5,036 home visits to families with young children. In total, the Parson administration invested nearly \$1 billion to improve Missouri's child-care network and create more options for more Missouri families.



Governor Parson joins Ivanka Trump for a visit to the Guadalupe Center's child-care facility at Metropolitan Community College–Penn Valley Campus during a US Department of Health and Human Services Roundtable Improving Access to High-Quality Healthcare event. From left: HHS Administration for Children and Families Assistant Secretary Lynn Johnson, Governor Parson, Ivanka Trump, HHS Secretary Alex Azar II, and Senator Roy Blunt. (Photo by HHS)

ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF CHILDHOOD

Early childhood care and education are essential to the state's success. Governor Parson established the Office of Childhood through Executive Order 21-02 to provide a comprehensive approach to early childhood care and education, including 150 state team members and more than twenty state programs related to child care, home visiting, early learning, and early intervention. This consolidation allowed the state to reduce processing time for child-care training approvals from two months to less than two weeks and reduce the processing time for subsidy payment adjustments from six weeks to one week. The new Office of Childhood is a more effective, high-quality early learning system that better prepares Missouri children for success.

CREATING THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Governor Parson created Missouri's Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (DHEWD) in 2019 through Executive Order 19-3. Ensuring Missourians have the training skills they need to find and retain a good job was just as important to the governor as ensuring employers have the environment they need in order to grow and create more good jobs. The former Department of Higher Education, Division of Workforce Development, and the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center were combined to form the state's cabinet-level workforce development and higher education policy agency. The reorganization was designed to provide better consolidation and coordination of the state's functions and targeted labor market information and analyses critical to advancing Missouri's postsecondary talent development functions. The department, which was unlike any across the nation, was charged with overseeing the needs of postsecondary institutions and helping them fully integrate with workforce development.

The new DHEWD was guided by the governor-appointed Coordinating Board for Higher Education in partnership with the State Workforce Development Board. The department administered the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), disbursed funding to the thirteen local workforce boards, and managed twenty-three American Job Centers across the state. DHEWD also managed the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, providing up-to-date data and research for program development and evaluation. The team's mission was to help put Missourians on a path to learn, work, and prosper.

Governor Parson also created and supported new DHEWD programs to ensure there are accessible and affordable education and training opportunities available across the state—from apprenticeships to investments in institutions and financial aid. He also championed programs to support forgotten demographics, such as those who began some level of higher education post high school and needed support to restart and complete their training, as well as incarcerated individuals and their reentry into the workforce. Governor Parson’s efforts have left a lasting impact for learners and workers across the state that will benefit their families and Missouri employers for years to come.

APPRENTICESHIP MISSOURI

A hallmark initiative of Governor Parson’s administration was establishing the Office of Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning within DHEWD. Since Governor Parson took office in 2018, more than sixty-two thousand new apprentices have participated in registered apprenticeship programs and more than twenty-two thousand individuals have completed apprenticeship training in Missouri. Apprenticeship Missouri is a statewide strategy that engages business and industry stakeholders to develop and implement on-the-job training in partnership with education systems.

Missouri became a national leader in apprenticeships, ranking first in providing apprenticeship opportunities for individuals with disabilities and second for overall completed apprenticeship. Nearly 2,300 individuals as of May 2024 have successfully mastered competencies and earned a nationally recognized credential in defined occupations such as corrections officers, skilled trades occupations (e.g., electrician, carpenter, machinist), and early childhood educators. As of August 2024, Missouri ranked third in new apprentices with more than 7,900 additional individuals embarking on their apprenticeship journey. Missouri was also third among states in active apprentices with more than 20,400 individuals currently engaged in apprenticeship training. Many Missouri state agencies joined the movement, using registered apprenticeship as the model to train staff or service providers, including the Departments of Higher Education and Workforce Development, Mental Health, Corrections, Conservation, and the Missouri National Guard.

RECORD INVESTMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

During Governor Parson’s tenure, higher education benefited from record investments and a competitive grant program, MoExcels, incentivizing workforce alignment. As a governor’s priority, DHEWD was tasked with

empowering every Missourian with the skills and education needed for success and were given historic levels of financial support.

Throughout Governor Parson's administration, core appropriations to the state's higher education institutions increased by nearly 30 percent. New investments to assist institutions with funding helped address emerging workforce needs in Missouri, totaling more than \$1.1 billion in fiscal year 2024. This funding supported teaching and learning and developed state-of-the-art educational facilities. The governor also invested nearly \$820 million in transformational capital projects for public institutions. This funding helped to address long-standing deferred maintenance issues, allowed institutions to make innovative changes to the educational process, and offered institutions an opportunity to improve students' overall experience at Missouri's colleges and universities.



Governor Parson addresses a roundtable of higher education leaders in the Roy Blunt NextGen Precision Health Institute at the University of Missouri–Columbia on February 11, 2022. From left: Lincoln University President Dr. John Moseley, Moberly Area Community College Vice President for Instruction Dr. Todd Martin, University of Missouri System President Dr. Mun Choi, Governor Parson, and First Lady Parson.

New Grant Program for Institutions: MoExcels Workforce Initiative

Since inception in fiscal year 2020, MoExcels has facilitated seventy-six projects at twenty-five institutions, totaling more than \$110.5 million across Missouri. MoExcels ensured institutions develop or expand programs that

HIGHER EDUCATION CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

- **Crowder** – Joplin Advance Training Center
- **East Central College**–Rolla Campus – Health Sciences Academy
- **Harris-Stowe State University** – STEM Academic Building
- **Jefferson College** – Arnold Expansion and Renovation
- **Lincoln University** – Health Sciences and Crisis Center
- **Metropolitan Community College** – 21st Century Teaching/Learning Environment Enhancement
- **Mineral Area College** – Center for Excellence
- **Missouri Southern State University** – Health Sciences, Technology, and Innovation Center
- **Missouri State University** – Center for Transformational Education for Life, Physical, and Health Sciences
- **Missouri State University** – Judith Enyeart Reynolds Complex
- **Missouri University of Science and Technology** – Missouri Protoplex
- **Missouri University of Science and Technology** – STEM Education
- **Missouri Western State University** – Student Success Hub
- **Moberly Area Community College** – Next Century Networking
- **North Central Missouri College** – Student Center
- **Northwest Missouri State University** – Martindale Hall
- **Northwest Missouri State University** – Energy Infrastructure Modernization
- **Ozarks Technical College** – Center for Workforce and Student Success
- **Southeast Missouri State University** – River Campus Extension
- **Southeast Missouri State University** – Modern Campus
- **St. Charles Community College** – Workforce Technical Innovation
- **St. Louis Community College** – Health Sciences Center
- **St. Louis Community College** – Wildwood Campus Expansion
- **State Fair Community College** – Advance Ag and Transportation Tech
- **State Technical College** – Supply Chain Workforce Education
- **Three Rivers College** – Technical Education Expansion
- **Truman State University** – Student Access and Success Center
- **Truman State University** – Multi-location HVAC System Improvement
- **University of Central Missouri** – Humphreys Building Renovation
- **University of Missouri–Columbia** – NextGen Precision Health
- **University of Missouri–Kansas City** – Health Sciences District Development
- **University of Missouri–St. Louis** – Campus of the Future
- **University of Missouri–St. Louis** – Engineering Building

are workforce connected and provided the skills and education needed for Missourians to prosper. Colleges and universities across the state utilized funding to launch or expand programs in cybersecurity, nursing, advanced welding, manufacturing, teacher preparation, autism support, and more. In fiscal year 2025, \$54.4 million was provided to twenty-three institutions, ranging from \$100,000 for enhancing the Public Safety and Forensics Institute at Missouri Southern State University to \$9.1 million to help bridge the Missouri manufacturing skills gap at the Missouri University of Science and Technology, East Central College, and St. Charles Community College.

Addressing Affordability for Missourians:

Two New Financial Aid Programs

Governor Parson established the Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant to provide financial support to adult learners pursuing an industry-recognized or high-demand credential. Participants had to be twenty-five or older, demonstrate financial need, and pursue an eligible program. The program provided financial support to unemployed and underemployed Missourians, allowing access to education and training needed to improve their lives. This financial aid program was unique, as it addressed both student and workforce needs. The program has been utilized heavily by women in health care; historically, 80 percent of recipients have been women and 50 percent first-generation college students.

The Dual Credit/Dual Enrollment Scholarship began serving students in 2023 with a need-based program that covered tuition and fees for high school students taking dual credit (college-level coursework in their high school) or dual enrollment (attending an institution as a high school student). The program provided access to college-level coursework while students are in high school, offering financial support to students from lower-income families. In fiscal year 2024, scholarships totaling nearly \$770,000 were awarded to 1,065 high school students, a 79 percent increase in participation over fiscal year 2023.

BUILDING THE WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW

Missouri Works

As the state's number one incentive tool for expansion and retention, the Missouri Works program helps businesses access capital through withholdings or tax credits to embark on facility expansions and create jobs. This program can also help businesses purchase equipment to maintain its facility in Missouri.

Certified Work Ready Communities

The Work Ready Community Initiative empowered counties across the United States to identify skill gaps and quantify the skill level of its workforce. Counties with a Certified Work Ready Community (CWRC) designation established a pipeline of local job candidates with high demand skills proven by the National Career Readiness Certificate. This focus allowed high school and career center students to explore careers within their county, develop work ready skills, and obtain industry-recognized credentials. Missouri was one of seven initial states in the country to implement the CWRC initiative. As of September 2024, Missouri leads the nation with ninety-four CWRCs and 5,444 supporting employers. More than one hundred Missouri counties actively participate in the CWRC initiative.

Modernizing Job Centers

The DHEWD was tasked with fostering regional partnerships to bring workforce development and higher education together to meet workforce needs and better serve Missourians. In 2024, DHEWD and the Missouri Innovation Campus in Lee's Summit, State Fair Community College in Clinton, and Ozarks Tech in Springfield opened an on-campus job center. In 2023, DHEWD and Southeast Missouri State University opened another center in Cape Girardeau. The on-campus centers connected students, job seekers, and community members with multiple resources in a mixed learning environment, providing an inviting space for prospective employers to interact with job seekers.

Missouri One Start

To invest in the workforce of tomorrow, Governor Parson created the Missouri One Start program with Executive Order 19-03 in 2019. This program became the state's premier workforce recruitment and training division and was ranked fifth in customized training across the United States in 2023 and 2024 by *Business Facilities* magazine. Missouri One Start assisted companies in relocating or expanding in Missouri, serving an average of 239 companies and representing 1,363 projects. More than 216,000 workers received training through this successful program. With the help of this program, leading employers continued to grow and invest in the state, including Kawasaki, Prysmian Group, and Ace Hardware.

Career Reciprocity

During a statewide listening session, Governor Parson learned Missouri had significant barriers to license reciprocity, which hampered workforce development and greatly impacted military spouses. Governor Parson took up the cause, and, in April 2020, he signed House Bills 1511 and 1452 into law, which allowed license reciprocity for military spouses relocating to Missouri with their active-duty partner. By allowing military spouses to work in their licensed occupation, House Bills 1511 and 1452 alleviated stress for military families relocating to Missouri. This legislation worked to ease that burden and improve the quality of life for military families living and working in Missouri and supported Governor Parson's broader focus on workforce development.

In July 2020, Governor Parson signed House Bill 2046, expanding full license reciprocity to eliminate governmental barriers to employment and to allow citizens to become licensed faster when moving or needing to find work in Missouri. House Bill 2046 removed the requirement that only Missouri residents are eligible for license reciprocity. Specifically, the bill expanded reciprocity to any individual holding a current, valid license who has been licensed for at least one year at the same practice level as Missouri in any profession regulated by a state board, department, or office of a jurisdiction.

On top of these provisions, House Bill 2046 established the Fresh Start Act and Expanded Workforce Act. The Fresh Start Act banned occupational licensing boards from denying individuals a license strictly due to their criminal history, if nonviolent and unrelated to the occupation. The Expanded Workforce Act created a pathway to occupational licensure through apprenticeship for any occupational license regulated by the Missouri Department of Commerce and Insurance. These changes not only helped fill critical jobs in Missouri's economy but also highlighted Missouri as an ideal state to live and work.

Addressing Health Care and Behavioral Health-Care Staffing Shortages

Governor Parson values grow-your-own workforce development programs designed to fill critical need jobs through training Missouri students. In fiscal year 2025, Governor Parson approved \$8 million in funds to develop additional medical residency and behavioral health residency slots to train more physicians in these high-need roles.

A New Outlook on Reentry

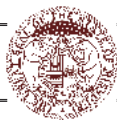
When Governor Parson took office, he said he was interested not in building more prisons but in helping people become more successful in life. By investing in effective reentry center services for people leaving prison and returning to the community, the state helped break cycles of recidivism and poverty and enhanced public safety. In 2023, Missouri became the first state in the United States to sign on to Reentry 2030, a national initiative that aims to dramatically improve reentry outcomes for people exiting prison. Under the governor's direction, DHEWD and the Department of Corrections (DOC) collaborated to maximize employment services and opportunities for those preparing to exit incarceration. As of July 2024, ten reentry centers were staffed by both agencies, providing assisted services as well as advanced technology to prepare offenders and eliminate barriers upon release. Participants are offered case management, support, training, job and resource fairs, and employment options to ensure they have the best opportunity to successfully return to their communities with opportunities for good-paying jobs and advancement prospects. Within one year of the program starting, 1,315 offenders received services and 43 percent of released participating offenders were employed within six months.



Governor Parson announces Missouri will be the first state to participate in Reentry 2030 to a crowd of corrections and reentry leaders in Jefferson City on April 24, 2023.



Governor and First Lady Parson with some help from their youngest granddaughter Sophie at the ceremonial ground breaking of the historic \$2.8 billion Improve I-70 Program on June 13, 2024. Also assisting is Columbia Mayor Barbara Buffaloe (right).



CHAPTER FIVE

INFRASTRUCTURE

“We know one of our top priorities is going to be infrastructure. We have to do something in the state of Missouri with our infrastructure. We cannot keep kicking that can down the road. We’re going to have to make some bold moves, and we’re going to have to meet the challenges of the future.”

—Governor Parson

From day one, improving Missouri’s infrastructure was one of Governor Parson’s top two priorities. At the time, the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) estimated the state needed about \$825 million more annually to meet high-priority infrastructure demands.

In 2021, the governor signed Senate Bill 262 into law, which included Missouri’s first transportation funding increase in twenty-five years. This increase of 2.5 cents per gallon of fuel each year for the five years that followed went into effect in October 2021 and included a refund available for all Missouri residents who applied.

During Governor Parson’s administration, the funding for Missouri’s Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) grew from \$2.5 billion to \$14.6 billion, making it the state’s largest transportation program ever. In July 2023, the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission (MHTC) approved the fiscal year 2024–2028 STIP, which listed transportation projects planned by state and regional planning agencies through 2028. The five-year program included funding from general revenue—passed by the Missouri General Assembly and signed by Governor Parson—to widen and improve Interstate 70, fix low-volume minor roads, upgrade railroad safety crossings, and more.



Governor Parson inspects a dilapidated bridge in rural St. Clair County on February 14, 2019.

FOCUS ON BRIDGES

In 2019, Governor Parson's first major infrastructure initiative established the Focus on Bridges program, proposing to repair or replace 250 substandard bridges throughout Missouri. At the time, of the more than ten thousand bridges across the state, more than eight hundred were in poor condition. The program was launched in May of that year by a \$50 million appropriation from general revenue by the Missouri General Assembly. Two months later, MoDOT received from the US Department of Transportation an \$81.2 million Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant, meeting the conditions of a Missouri Senate joint resolution, resulting in an additional \$301 million in bonding revenue approved by the legislature.

In just over one year, one hundred of Missouri's poorest bridges had been replaced or rehabilitated. Governor Parson celebrated the completion of the entire program on December 19, 2023, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the newly replaced Blue Ridge Boulevard bridge over I-70 in Independence. "Infrastructure has been a top priority since Day One, and four years ago, we set out to replace 250 of our poorest bridges through the Focus on Bridges program," the governor said. "From St. Louis to Springfield, from the Bootheel to the great Northwest, this program benefited Missourians everywhere. While there is more to do, we know we have made a real difference and created a lasting model that will continue to serve Missourians now and into the future."



Governor Parson ceremonially signs Senate Bill 262 into law, which will increase transportation funding for critical state and local infrastructure projects across the state of Missouri, in St. Louis on July 13, 2021.



Governor Parson highlights the bridge on Route 50 at Chipman Road as part of his Focus on Bridges program in Lee's Summit on September 8, 2022.



Governor Parson participates in a bolt-turning commencement ceremony for the \$240 million Rocheport I-70 Missouri River Bridge project on October 12, 2021. From left: MoDOT Project Director Brandi Baldwin, US Representative Vicky Hartzler, Governor Parson, State Senator Caleb Rowden, and MoDOT Director Patrick McKenna.

Rocheport Bridge

On October 12, 2021, Governor Parson officially launched the construction of two parallel I-70 bridges spanning the Missouri River near Rocheport. At the time, the existing single four-lane bridge was sixty years old, carried 12.5 million vehicles per year including 3.6 million trucks, and was rated as being in poor condition.

The new bridge included safety enhancements such as high-friction surface treatment and pavement sensors to reduce weather-related incidents, wet reflective striping, and a line of reflective signs along the barrier walls to increase lane and bridge visibility. The project was funded in part by an \$81.2 million INFRA grant, the largest competitive grant ever received at the time by MoDOT.

The first bridge, built alongside to the original bridge, was completed during the summer of 2023, temporarily carrying both westbound and eastbound traffic. On September 10 of the same year, the original bridge was imploded and construction began in the same location on the second bridge, designed to carry eastbound traffic only, freeing up the first bridge for westbound traffic only.

Buck O'Neil Bridge

Built in 1956 to carry US Route 169 traffic across the Missouri River from downtown Kansas City to the city of Riverside and the Charles B. Wheeler Downtown Airport, the triple-arch Buck O'Neil Bridge had become a significant source of congestion for rush-hour traffic when Governor Parson took office in 2018. This, along with outdated ramp access and a high number of accidents, resulted in up to three hours of additional drive time for many of the forty-five thousand vehicles that crossed the bridge daily. As a result, Governor Parson, along with officials in the Kansas City area, broke ground for a replacement bridge on June 23, 2021, fulfilling a promise he had made earlier in his 2020 State of the State Address.

On January 29, 2024, the new Buck O'Neil Bridge opened to northbound traffic. Two weeks later, demolition of the 1956 northern span began through the use of explosives. During the following months, while the new southbound span was being built on the demolition site, southbound traffic was detoured to the I-29/I-35 (Christopher Bond) Bridge. The completed project, finished before Governor Parson's second term in office ended, included improved interchanges to I-35 and I-70 on the south end, better access to Charles B. Wheeler Downtown Airport on the north end, and a barrier-separated bicycle and pedestrian trail across the Missouri River.



Governor Parson breaks ground on the Buck O'Neil Bridge project in Kansas City on June 23, 2021. From left: Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas, Northland Regional Chamber of Commerce President Sheila Tracy, Governor Parson, Jackson County Executive Frank White, and MHTC Commissioner Gregg Smith.

LOW-VOLUME ROADS

Of the more than 10,400 miles of low-volume roads throughout Missouri, 5,200 were deemed ineligible for federal funds for improvement. MoDOT determined 1,700 lane-miles were in poor condition. In 2022, the governor recommended and the general assembly approved \$100 million in general revenue for MoDOT to invest in the state's low-volume rural roads. As a result, 113 locations received resurfacing treatments. These locations were bundled into fourteen projects to provide good contracts for contractor competition. The contracts were awarded at \$115 million, with \$100 million coming from general revenue and \$15 million from the state road fund. All the contracts were completed on time.

In 2023, the governor signed the fiscal year 2024 budget to include an additional \$100 million in general revenue for Missouri's low-volume rural roads. Again, using data-driven analysis, MoDOT identified more than 1,800 lane-miles of low-volume roads in poor condition. The 147 locations will receive treatments to improve the road conditions. The locations have been bundled into forty projects across the state. The completion date is November 2024.

In 2024, the governor signed the fiscal year 2025 budget including an additional \$100 million to continue the low-volume road improvements. This funding will be used to improve conditions on 1,985 lane-miles of rural roads at 149 locations. The work will be bundled into nineteen projects across the state and is scheduled for completion by November 2025.



Governor Parson and MoDOT Director Patrick McKenna tour the US Route 136 rural route repair project near Maryville on August 10, 2022.

INTERSTATE 70 EXPANSION

In 2023, the governor proposed \$859 million be allocated to widen and improve I-70 in the St. Louis, Kansas City, and Columbia areas. The general assembly approved \$2.8 billion be budgeted to widen I-70 to three lanes in each direction for nearly two hundred miles—from Blue Springs to Wentzville. In his final State of the State Address, Governor Parson announced Missouri had secured a \$92.8 million INFRA grant to improve Interstate 70. This funding would be used to upgrade truck parking, the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS), work zone safety technology, and workforce development, all to enhance the efforts of adding an additional lane to I-70 throughout the state.

The overall goal of the Improve I-70 project across Missouri is to provide safe, efficient, environmentally sound, and cost-effective transportation that responds to corridor needs as a national interstate. Missouri's fiscal year 2024 budget from the general assembly supported by Governor Parson provided \$2.8 billion in general revenue for the costs to plan, design, construct, reconstruct, rehabilitate, and repair three lanes in each direction.

For decades the expansion of I-70 was talked about in the State Capitol. After decades of inaction, our administration, with the help of the General Assembly, secured a historic investment of \$2.8 billion last year to add a third lane across our state. This additional grant money will help us build upon our historic investment and continue our administration's commitment to improving our state's infrastructure. We thank Congressman Sam Graves for his leadership in securing this grant, the largest transportation grant Missouri has ever received.

—Governor Parson



Governor Parson and MoDOT team members managing Improve I-70 Program's Project 1—Columbia to Kingdom City—ceremonially break ground in Columbia on June 13, 2024.

The first Improve I-70 contract was awarded in February 2024 for a twenty-mile stretch in mid-Missouri. The civil construction company Millstone Weber was chosen for the \$405 million contract, which also included \$123 million previously programmed for the interchanges at US Route 63 and US Route 54. A ground-breaking ceremony was held on June 13, 2024, in Columbia, with the project completion date being anticipated in late 2027. The remaining contracts for Improve I-70 will continue to be awarded through 2027, and the entire project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2030.

INTERSTATE 44 PLANNING

Interstate 44 (I-44), completed in 1966, is one of five interstates built across the United States to bypass US Route 66. In the decades since it opened, I-44 has established itself as a route of statewide and national importance and a key commercial trucking corridor.

Due to mounting concerns about the increased congestion and decreased safety of Missouri's stretch of I-44, Governor Parson in 2023 recommended \$20 million of Missouri's fiscal year 2024 general revenue

budget to be used for an I-44 environmental study. This study, known as Forward 44, would be a critical step in preparing for future projects on the interstate, including more than 250 miles of the I-44 corridor from the Oklahoma state line to the Franklin County/St. Louis County line. Results of the study would include options to divide the more than 250 miles of the I-44 corridor into logical independent segments. Those project segments could then be prioritized for further in-depth study to determine a preferred alternative and prepare for detailed design and construction when funds are available. Expected to be completed by early 2025, Forward 44 will be followed by more in-depth review in smaller segments, possibly taking another two years.

In his 2024 State of the State Address, Governor Parson recommended the I-44 Improvement Fund be established, thanks to the help of an INFRA grant and savings and interest accrued on the \$2.8 billion set aside for the Improve I-70 initiative approved by the general assembly in 2023. This fund supplemented the nearly \$150 million already budgeted for expansion studies and improvements on I-44. Missouri's fiscal year 2025 state budget, approved by the general assembly and signed by Governor Parson, included \$577.5 million in general revenue to be used on systematic improvements along I-44.

The initial plan for this funding included:

- \$165.5 million to add a third lane from US Route 160 west of Springfield to Missouri Route 125 to Strafford.
- \$175 million in Joplin to add new ramps to and from I-49 and I-44. This was identified as Phases 2 and 3 for this interchange, known as the Fidelity Interchange.
- \$178 million for needs identified as Tier 2 and 3 High-Priority Unfunded Needs. These projects would focus on improving critical pavement needs at various locations along the corridor.
- The remaining \$59 million would be available for the highest and best needs that come out of the Forward 44 environmental study and subsequent planning process.

MoDOT called for public input on its corridor study of Interstate 44 in advance of planned upgrades, enabling Missouri residents to provide feedback for the Forward 44 initiative at a series of public meetings across the state during the summer of 2024.

FUTURE INTERSTATE 57/ROUTE 67 IMPROVEMENTS

In the fiscal year 2025 budget, the governor demonstrated his commitment to improving Missouri's infrastructure both urban and rural by approving \$150 million to be used to improve US Route 67/Future I-57 in southeast Missouri. This funding propelled Phase 1B and Phase 2 of the Route 67 Corridor projects forward, facilitating the completion of 3.8 miles of a new four-lane road from Poplar Bluff south to County Road 352. The projects were scheduled to be under contract in the fall of 2025. The next construction segment extended from County Road 352 to Missouri Route 142 in Neelyville, adding three miles of new four-lane road and a partial interchange at Neelyville, with the earliest awarded contract award set for May 2025. Upon completion of these projects, only 4.5 miles of work would remain to be funded to reach the Arkansas state line. This strategic investment in infrastructure significantly enhanced connectivity and economic opportunities in southeast Missouri.

GOVERNOR'S TRANSPORTATION COST-SHARE PROGRAM

Governor Parson encouraged his team to think outside the box and look for new partnerships to fund large needs. He believed it was important for the local level to have some skin in the game when investing within a community. To that effect, during the 2019 legislative session, the Missouri General Assembly appropriated \$50 million to MoDOT and the Department of Economic Development (DED) to establish the Governor's Transportation Cost-Share Program. This program aimed to build partnerships with local entities to deliver more road and bridge projects. Local entities submitted applications for their projects, explaining both the infrastructure and economic benefit to the state and community. Many projects included new roads, bridges, or interchanges to support the development of industrial parks or increase logistical efficiency for new, expanding, or existing businesses. All approved projects required local matches for any state funds that were received, meaning state tax dollars leveraged much larger investments in local communities.

To award the funds, a Cost Share Committee worked cooperatively with the DED to select projects with the greatest economic benefit to the state. Those projects were then recommended for approval by the MHTC. The success of the program prompted continued funding throughout Governor Parson's administration. MoDOT estimates the total \$100 million in state funds appropriated under Governor Parson will deliver transportation improvements totaling nearly \$260 million across the

state, or a \$2.60 return for every \$1.00 in state money invested in local infrastructure projects.

Additionally, the success of the Governor's Transportation Cost-Share Program helped pave the way for other state and local investments in infrastructure and workforce development, including the Community Partnership Development Revitalization and Industrial Site Development programs.

RAILROAD SAFETY

In response to a passenger train derailment that claimed four lives near Mendon in June 2022, Governor Parson proposed a historic \$50 million for railroad crossing improvements. Prior to this, the state provided just \$1.5 million annually in funds for railroad safety crossing improvements. The National Transportation Safety Board released its findings concerning the accident and concluded poor crossing design, including the lack of flashing lights, bells, and gates where the collision between the Amtrak train and a dump truck occurred, was the primary cause. Governor Parson believed the state must be proactive and help prevent a similar situation. In response, the general assembly approved the funds to improve forty-seven passenger rail crossings, along with additional advanced signage on roads as drivers approach a railroad crossing.



Governor Parson announces rail safety improvements following the approval of a historic \$50 million for railroad safety within the fiscal year 2024 budget at MoDOT general headquarters in Jefferson City on August 3, 2023. From left: National Transportation Safety Board Chair Jennifer Homendy, Federal Railroad Administrator Amit Bose, Governor Parson, Representative Tim Taylor, and MoDOT Director Patick McKenna.



Governor Parson with Jefferson City Mayor Carrie Tergin and Columbia Mayor Brian Treece during a ground-breaking ceremony for a new Columbia Regional Airport terminal on November 17, 2020.

AIRPORT EXPANSIONS

Governor Parson believed with better, more efficient travel options to Missouri destinations, the state could attract more businesses ready to grow, invest, and create jobs. At the heart of the Midwest, the state remains an ideal business and travel destination in the center of North America.

In 2021, it was announced Lufthansa Airlines would add a new direct flight from St. Louis Lambert International Airport to Frankfurt, Germany. This marked the first time in nearly two decades a nonstop flight to continental Europe departed from St. Louis Lambert International Airport.

During the Parson administration, \$31 million in funding was provided for improvements to airports, including Buffalo, Cape Girardeau, Jefferson City, Kirksville, Rosecrans/St. Joseph, St. Charles County, Warrensburg, Washington County, and Waynesville/St. Robert. Travelers can now fly nonstop to more than seventy destinations because of Missouri's two international airports and many regional airports.

PORT DEVELOPMENT

On June 30, 2023, Governor Parson signed the fiscal year 2024 state operating and capital improvement budget bills, which included \$37 million toward the improvement and growth of two Missouri River ports

in Kansas City. A year later, Governor Parson appropriated another \$11.6 million for additional improvements at Missouri's river ports in the fiscal year 2025 budget.

To help accommodate the growth of freight distribution in the United States (which was expected to double by 2040), the widening of the Panama Canal, rising ground transportation costs, and growing traffic on US highways, inland rivers were increasingly becoming a vital part of the supply chain. As a result, Kansas City had become one of the country's fastest-growing industrial distribution and logistical hubs. Therefore, a second dock at the Terminal Woodswether in the West Bottoms, a seven-acre multi-modal facility with rail connections and immediate interstate access, was planned to double the volume of barge traffic. Additionally, a second port, the Missouri River Terminal, was proposed at the convergence of the Blue River into the Missouri River in Jackson County. Developing this site, which already had access to five major railroads and the Missouri River, would result in better road access for trucks in and out of the property.

Completion of these improvements would expand Kansas City's footprint as a global logistics center and attract needed new jobs and opportunities to the east side of the city.

During an event celebrating the allocation of \$37 million to PortKC, officials announce the renaming of the Woodswether Terminal to the Governor Michael L. Parson Port Terminal in Kansas City on November 14, 2023.



WATER, WASTEWATER, AND STORMWATER

Water is one of Missouri's most abundant and precious resources. Long-term investments in drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater are critical, and the Parson administration allocated more than \$495 million of the state's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to help Missouri communities improve water infrastructure as well as lead service line inventories. In addition, the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) authorized a historic investment of more than \$856 million for Missouri's drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater through the State Revolving Fund program for federal fiscal years 2022 through 2026. These investments help ensure Missourians continue to have access to quality water resources.

Missouri Hydrology Information Center

Missouri experienced historic floods in recent decades, most notably the floods of 1993, 1998, 2011, and 2019. The 2019 flood caused an estimated \$20 billion in losses impacting the Missouri and Mississippi River Basins. The impacts of the 2019 flooding demonstrated the need for better flood protection and flood resiliency in Missouri. In response, Governor Parson established the Flood Recovery Advisory Working Group, which recommended the formation of a water center for the State of Missouri. In 2022, Governor Parson authorized \$10.5 million for the Missouri Hydrology Information Center (MoHIC). MoHIC was created to focus on flood-related projects, drought mitigation, aquifer characterization, modeling, and prediction.

Columbia Bottom Levee Setback

As part of the Parson administration's efforts to improve flood resiliency, more than \$27 million was dedicated to the Columbia Bottom Levee Setback. The project reconnected the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers with the historic floodplain in St. Louis County and secured more than three thousand acres of forested wetland for additional flood storage in the Columbia Bottom Conservation Area. The damaged main road was relocated away from flood hazards to maintain a popular river access point in the area.

Atchison County Levee Setback

Atchison County was significantly impacted by flooding in 2019. By the end of the flooding, Atchison County had nineteen levee breaches, destroying infrastructure, farmland, homes, and businesses. A cost analysis performed

by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) determined it would be more cost effective to realign the south part of the levee rather than repair it in place. The realigned portion of the levee was nearly five miles long and reconnected approximately 1,100 acres of floodplain and created more wetlands habitat.

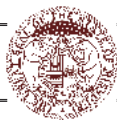
IMPROVING BROADBAND ACCESS

Another important piece of the governor's infrastructure plan was broadband technology. High-speed internet is necessary to support learning, health care, business, and agriculture in today's economy. The Parson administration invested over \$400 million toward broadband expansion, connecting tens of thousands of homes, businesses, and farms across the state. In addition, the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced Missouri would receive more than \$1.7 billion through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, part of the federal Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act (IIJA). Missouri's BEAD program allocation ranked as the third highest among all states, the District of Columbia, and five territories:

- More than \$310 million awarded for broadband development
- More than seventy-five thousand connections made to Missouri homes, farms, businesses, and more
- Secured \$1.7 billion for broadband deployment through the IIJA
- Secured \$10 million in the first round of digital opportunity funding through the IIJA
- Adjudicated more than 5,500 distinct challenges with implications for the fundability of more than two hundred thousand locations through the state challenge process



Governor Parson signs House Bill 14, increasing state team members' pay, at the Harry S. Truman Building in Jefferson City on March 3, 2023.



CHAPTER SIX

BETTER GOVERNMENT

“ Our State of Missouri team is committed to better serving our citizens. They do so many remarkable things, such as helping children and families get support, protecting our natural resources, keeping our roads safe, and lifting up our communities. Without a doubt, every servant throughout our state has one goal in mind – to move Missouri forward! ”

—Governor Parson

When Governor Parson was sworn in as Missouri’s fifty-seventh governor, Missourians were tired of the turmoil, political infighting, and self-involved personalities. Missourians were tired of quitters. That day, Governor Parson declared a fresh start and the return of stability and integrity to state government. Easily said but hard won, Governor Parson knew he could not do it alone. To accomplish these goals, he and his team knew they needed Missouri’s seventeen departments and nearly fifty thousand state employees working together, not apart. By bringing a team-focused mentality to state government that set egos aside and encouraged state team members to lean into their public service potential, the Parson administration reformed state government, achieving historic improvements for state team member pay, the state pension system, IT systems, burdensome rules and regulations, public safety, and mental health services.

HISTORIC PAY INCREASES FOR STATE TEAM MEMBERS

Before Governor Parson assumed office, morale in state government was low. State government was quickly becoming underappreciated, understaffed, and underpaid. To accomplish his workforce development and infrastructure goals, Governor Parson knew he needed a state team that was efficient, effective, and talented. To achieve this team mentality started with ensuring team members' salaries were more competitive with market rates.

In fiscal year 2019, Governor Parson signed into law a budget that included \$34 million for pay increases to employees across state government. This brought a more than 1 percent pay increase to the vast majority of state workers. While a start, Governor Parson knew government could do better. In fiscal year 2020, Governor Parson recommended a 3 percent Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for all state team members. Legislators listened and understood the critical need to improve pay for Missouri public servants. Governor Parson signed the COLA into law in June 2019.

Throughout his administration, Governor Parson continued this progress in increasing the pay competitiveness of state jobs. For fiscal year 2022, through both the regular budget process and a supplemental budget request, he recommended and approved COLA increases totaling 7.5 percent for all state workers as well as a \$15 per hour minimum base pay standard across state government. In fiscal year 2023, through a supplemental budget request, Governor Parson recommended and approved an 8.7 percent COLA increase for all team members as well as a \$2 per hour pay differential for congregate care staff. Among the final fiscal year 2024 budget bills passed in May 2023, on top of the COLA increase for all state workers, Governor Parson approved up to \$4,000 in pay raises for all Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP) troopers.

In his 2024 State of the State Address, the final address of his administration, Governor Parson called on the general assembly to approve another 3.2 percent COLA increase for all team members and a tenure increase for staff working in congregate care—a 1 percent pay increase for every two years of service, capped at 10 percent. Governor Parson signed these increases into law in June 2024. With the cumulative impact of these pay increases, **Governor Parson delivered a nearly 27 percent pay increase for all state team members during his six years in office.** In the past, leaders were unable or unwilling to support the state workforce in similar ways, but Governor Parson made a commitment and kept his promise, leaving the state government's workforce better than he found it.



DOC team members celebrate as Governor Parson signs House Bill 9, which includes a pay raise for all state team members and an additional increase to retain current DOC staff, on June 10, 2019.



Governor Parson shakes the hand of a resident of the Cape Girardeau Veteran Home on February 28, 2023, during a ceremonial signing of House Bill 14, which provided an up to \$2 shift differential to state team members staffing long-term care facilities.

At the highest, turnover and vacancy rates across state government were commonly at 10–20 percent and 30–40 percent, respectively, both rates reaching as high as 100 percent in some divisions. At its lowest under the Parson administration, state government employed just around forty-two thousand employees or full-time equivalent (FTE) positions when years of balanced and conservative budgets accounted for nearly fifty-four thousand FTE positions for state operations. After approving historic pay increases, Governor Parson would leave state government having netted approximately 6,500 new employees for a total of 48,500 workers across state government. Governor Parson left the state workforce on a path for success, if future leaders can keep it.

SUPPORT FOR TEAM MEMBERS BEYOND SALARY INCREASES

Competitive pay is critical to having a high-functioning state workforce, but pay isn't the only thing employees count on when they come work for the state—it's the benefits offered, too. State pension benefits are highly sought after, and Governor Parson took it upon his administration to make certain the pension system remains solvent for the years to come.

The Parson administration fully funded the Missouri State Employees Retirement System's (MOSERS) appropriations request every year, a significant factor towards ensuring fund stability. Additionally, under Governor Parson's leadership, the state made an additional \$500 million contribution to MOSERS in July 2022. As a result, the system's assets increased in the fiscal year 2023 actuarial valuation from \$8.25 billion to \$8.55 billion. The additional payment increased the system's funded ratio by approximately 3 percent. In the future, when fully recognized by the MOSERS board, the extraordinary payment is anticipated to decrease the employer contribution rate by 1.5 percent, which is estimated to produce substantial taxpayer savings over the next ten years. These actions strengthened fund solvency and reduced future budgetary strains in the event of any potential future economic downturn.

Additionally, beyond direct pay increases and pensions, Governor Parson ensured state team members' health-care premiums remained stable through the state's health insurance plans—never increasing insurance premiums for state employees or their families, not even once, throughout his six years in office.

In addition to protecting state team members' pensions, Governor Parson's administration reinstated and funded an employer match program to help state employees boost their MO Deferred Compensation retirement plans. This program was intended as a tool for retaining senior and experienced team members. In July 2022, Missouri began offering state team members a one-for-one match for deferred compensation contributions of at least \$25 a month up to a maximum of \$75 each month. After one-and-a-half years into the match offering, 21 percent more employees participated in deferred compensation. The number of employees contributing \$75 or over per month increased by over 65 percent.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Governor Parson launched The Missouri Way in August 2018 as an essential part of the state's new plans to improve its performance and work environment. The Missouri Way, an intensive professional development program, introduced senior leaders, managers, supervisors, and other emerging leaders in all seventeen executive departments to the tools and approaches to lead change and improve their team's performance. To date, the state has completed forty sessions of The Missouri Way since the program's launch, training more than 2,350 state team members.



Governor Parson addresses state team members during a session of The Missouri Way, the state's advanced management training program, on August 13, 2019.

The governor's cabinet established The Missouri Leadership Academy in April 2018 as a new cross-department leadership program. The Missouri Leadership Academy was created as an innovative program to bring together leaders from across the state to develop new skills and become better leaders. Participants built their capabilities in three core areas: leading themselves, leading others, and leading change in state government. The program now has 398 graduates. Since graduating, more than 88 percent of graduates have been retained as state employees and 38 percent of graduates have been promoted to higher level leadership positions within state government.

Under Governor Parson, the path to growing a job with the state into a full-time, fulfilling career in service to Missourians was encouraged, cultivated, and rewarded for work well done.

BETTERING STATE SERVICES

Throughout his administration, Governor Parson directed his cabinet leaders to do better than what had been done before. This resulted in a reduction of burdensome red tape, consolidation or reorganization of state agencies, and the implementation of overall better government strategies.



Governor Parson announces a major restructuring of four state agencies in an effort to improve economic and workforce development in Missouri on January 17, 2019. From left: Department of Higher Education Commissioner Zora Mulligan; DED Director Rob Dixon; Governor Parson; DNR Director Carol Comer; and Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions, and Professional Registration Director Chlora Lindley-Myers.

A major accomplishment in Governor Parson's plan to improve state government was an official restructuring of four state agencies. Initially announced through a series of executive orders issued by Governor Parson in January 2019, the changes represented the most significant reorganization of state government in decades.

The reorganization moved several divisions from the Department of Economic Development (DED) to other state agencies in an effort to create a more focused economic development strategy and be more competitive with neighboring states:

- The Division of Workforce Development and the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center moved to the newly named Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (DHEWD) (formerly the Department of Higher Education) to establish a single state resource for all postsecondary education options.
- The Division of Energy moved to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
- The Office of Public Counsel (OPC) and the Public Service Commission (PSC) moved to the newly named Department of Commerce and Insurance (DCI) (formerly the Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions, and Professional Registration).
- The Missouri Arts Council moved to the office of the lieutenant governor.

A decline in the statewide prison population, initiated by changes in the state's criminal code and sustained through Justice Reinvestment Initiative practices, put Governor Parson in a position to consolidate Crossroads Correctional Center and Western Missouri Correctional Center, both in Cameron, Missouri, in 2019. The move helped to ensure better prison staffing levels statewide, generate savings to invest in staff pay increases, and make way for the construction of the hands-on residential training center known as the Academy for Excellence in Corrections, which opened in 2024.

In 2021, Governor Parson signed Senate Bill 120 that created the Missouri Department of the National Guard, which was previously underneath the umbrella of the Department of Public Safety (DPS). In 2022, Missourians voted on Amendment 5 that put in the Missouri Constitution the creation of the new department.

By better aligning certain functions of state government, these changes streamlined operations, increased efficiency, and improved customer service to all Missourians.

Upgrading Missouri's IT Infrastructure to the Modern Age

To modernize online government services, Governor Parson's administration established the Digital Government Transformation strategy, and with a \$126 million investment in fiscal year 2023, the administration got to work. Additionally, the Cabinet IT Governance Council was established to oversee the management of IT projects and programs across the consolidated departments.

Under Governor Parson's leadership, the state procured, customized, and implemented a complete overhaul of the state's enterprise resource planning system. The new enterprise resource system, MOVERS, is an integration of many previously separate IT systems into one modern, integrated system and consists of budgeting, financials, procurement, grants/projects, human resources, time and attendance, payroll, manufacturing, and fleet capabilities.

MOVERS modernizes the state's productivity tools, ensuring all state agencies have access to a baseline level of Microsoft Office services, including M365. It also upgraded citizen portal infrastructure, creating a single "one stop shop" for citizens to access anything they need from state government. The system simplifies and consolidates information found across state agency websites and portals.

Steps were taken to modernize a number of state data management systems, including child support, Division of Youth Services case management, adult protective services, alcohol licensing, crime victim alerts, crime victim compensation, developmental disabilities case management, early childhood professional development registry, grain regulatory services, Home and Community Based Services case management, MO Electronic Vital Records, Missouri Eligibility and Enrollment System (MEDES), MO Vehicle Driver's Licenses, reportable disease and condition surveillance system, unemployment insurance, and occupational licenses, among others.

With the passage of Senate Bill 63 (2021), the Parson administration developed and implemented a statewide prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) system. The purpose of the PDMP was to reduce abuse and misuse of controlled substances such as opioids by making dispensation information for such substances available to prescribers, dispensers, and health-care providers. Now, pharmacies in the state of Missouri are required to submit information to the PDMP when they dispense any prescribed Schedule II, III, or IV controlled substances to patients in Missouri.



Governor Parson signs Senate Bill 63, creating a statewide prescription drug monitoring program, alongside bill sponsor Senator Holly Rehder (front left) and bill handler Representative Travis Smith (front right) on June 7, 2021.

Procurement Reform Accomplishments

When Governor Parson came into office, Missouri's procurement process was a major pain point. State employees, contractors, business leaders, and state officials were all unsatisfied with the cumbersome and inefficient process. Whether private or public, no one was happy when it came to trying to do business with state procurement. Governor Parson's administration empowered team members with extensive reform and achieved several milestones in the process:

- Implemented legislation Senate Bill 758 to allow the use of design-build and Construction-Manager-At-Risk for certain projects, aimed at decreasing cost and increasing efficiency
- Increased buyers'/managers' approval authority to minimize review timelines
- Developed a repository of procurement resources and reference materials for procurement team members to improve problem solving and turnaround times and to share with state agencies

- Simplified the information state agencies must submit to Office of Administration-Procurement to build solicitations, resulting in improved turnaround times and improved collaboration with state agencies

Together, these actions made real, lasting changes in how the State of Missouri did business. After implementation, procurements behind schedule were reduced by 50 percent.

PUBLIC SAFETY: MAKING MISSOURI SAFE, SECURE, AND PREPARED

Having been in law enforcement for twenty-two years and serving as the sheriff of Polk County, public safety was at the forefront in all actions Governor Parson and his administration took. During Governor Parson's tenure, the national environment could be hostile to law enforcement. But in Missouri, the state supported its men and women in blue. When anti-law enforcement activists called for defunding the police, Governor Parson and his administration pushed back by increasing support for law enforcement professionals, boosting recruitment strategies, and investing in better public safety technologies.

Attracting and Sustaining the Next Generation of Law Enforcement

In 2020, Missouri licensed the first law enforcement training academy at a historically black college and university (HBCU), the Lincoln University Law Enforcement Training Academy. The academy attracted diverse recruits to law enforcement and expanded to provide training at Harris-Stowe State University, an HBCU in St. Louis, through May 2024. The Lincoln University academy graduated 120 recruits, 101 of whom were minorities/women (seventy-eight minorities, twenty-three women). Ninety-four went on to work in law enforcement immediately.

Governor Parson also announced the Missouri Blue Scholarship in 2020 to expand opportunities in law enforcement for interested Missourians with law enforcement academy scholarships of up to \$5,000. Through August 2024, more than 301 Missouri Blue Scholarships have been awarded, with hundreds of officers added to the state's law enforcement ranks. The scholarship's availability expanded the academy applicant pool by removing or significantly reducing the burden of academy tuition in an effort to encourage more low-income, minority recruits. It also relieved the student loan burden for young officers and their families, particularly in smaller

agencies with limited funding. Missouri Blue Scholarship funding began with a \$1 million appropriation in fiscal year 2023, which was increased to \$2 million in fiscal year 2024 because high demand the first year expended all funds. Emblematic of the program's effectiveness, seven of the Fulton Police Department's twenty-three officers were Missouri Blue Scholarship recipients by August 2024.

Backing the Blue

Understanding firsthand the heavy demands on first responders, Governor Parson worked to improve the financial, physical, mental, and emotional support for Missouri's law enforcement officers.

Combining expertise and resources across state government, Governor Parson's administration provided the first direct appropriation for the MSHP's "DEFENSE" program in 2019, which has provided almost 350 first responders and loved ones with three-day therapeutic post-critical incident seminars following traumatic events. The peer support program assisted both first responders and spouses/partners by promoting mental health and helping in the retention of first responders who routinely deal with traumatic events.

Governor Parson addresses Missouri State Highway Patrol Law Enforcement Academy graduates in Jefferson City on January 12, 2022.



In 2022, DPS partnered with the Warrior's Rest Foundation to provide free one-, two-, and three-day Critical Incident Stress Management training to any Missouri first responder interested in peer support training. Funded through a total of \$1.6 million in appropriations in fiscal years 2022–2024, the program supported first responders by promoting mental health and helping in the retention of law enforcement officers and other responders. The program reached more than 950 responders through June 2024.

Governor Parson and the Missouri legislature funded a \$30 million grant program in 2023 for first responders, emergency medical services personnel, the fire service, and local law enforcement agencies to address needs across their agencies, including equipment, training, and technology improvements.

Harnessing Technology to Strengthen Public Safety in Missouri

In 2019, the MSHP developed the MoAlerts application to quickly deliver Missouri AMBER and Blue Alerts directly to the public through their cell phones as wireless emergency alerts, utilizing the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) network. This vastly expanded the transmission of these alerts, which had relied primarily on television and radio broadcasts. The patrol enhanced the system to go beyond the limitation of short text-only messages by sending URL links to updated information that may include images of the missing child, suspected abductor, and more. The patrol developed this system that improved the timeliness, accuracy, and effectiveness of alerts entirely in-house, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in development costs and hundreds of thousands more by avoiding ongoing vendor fees. The patrol app was credited with directly resolving five child abductions in 2022, four child abductions in 2023, and one in May 2024.

In 2022, Governor Parson instructed DPS to take full advantage of license plate readers (LPRs) in the fight against crime and terrorism. Forty-three LPRs were linked and additional funding was used to expand the network of LPR-information sharing among Missouri law enforcement agencies already utilizing LPRs.

These efforts were instrumental in solving crimes, reducing criminal activity, and apprehending criminals—including multiple murder and robbery suspects as well as a suspect in a carjacking in which the life of a young child was threatened. In late 2024, DPS provided funding for LPRs in sixteen additional counties that will result in coverage of most interstates and highways entering Missouri. Separately, through May 2024, DPS approved 130 law enforcement agency requests to place LPRs on state rights of way.

Under the Parson administration, the Division of Fire Safety (DFS) undertook a sweeping program to transition from obsolete paper-based record systems to up-to-date paperless electronic systems. These changes streamlined the annual fireworks permitting process and allowed applications to be completed entirely online. The DFS's move to digital provided first responders with individual portal accounts, where they could access their training histories and register for training and testing online. More than twelve thousand first responders have utilized the online system. The Fire and Explosion Investigations Unit's adoption of mobile data terminals and an up-to-date records management system meant Missouri Uniform Law Enforcement System (MULES) inquiries and reports could be completed in the field, photographs could be uploaded, and supervisors could easily locate investigators in the field. These changes overhauled how day-to-day business was conducted and increased team member productivity, saving time, effort, and taxpayer dollars.

SEMA Transforms Response Capabilities

Under Governor Parson's leadership, the State Emergency Management Agency's (SEMA) Missouri Disaster Medical Assistance Team (MO DMAT-1) was transformed into a rapidly deployable, fully equipped unit capable of providing highly specialized medical personnel for diverse mission



On March 14, 2024, Governor Parson thanks Missouri Disaster Medical Assistance Team members, who responded to the 2024 Kansas City Chiefs Super Bowl Parade crisis.

assignments. MO DMAT-1 response teams were configured to provide relief for overwhelmed hospitals and nursing homes, monoclonal infusion clinics, medical testing and vaccination assignments, as well as first aid care at major public events—from Super Bowl parades to large concerts. In addition to expanded medical equipment, MO DMAT-1 was equipped with multiple trucks, specialized trailers, freezers, a fifteen-passenger van, medical tents, and generators as well as a new mobile hospital acquired in fiscal year 2024.

ONE HEALTH LAB

Governor Parson helped allocate funding for a new \$183 million multi-agency state laboratory campus in Jefferson City. This campus will include an approximately 208,000-square-foot, multi-story building; an improved parking area to accommodate the state workforce in both the new and existing laboratory facilities; and an elevated walkway connected to the existing Missouri State Public Health Laboratory. This facility will serve as a hub for cutting-edge scientific work, bringing together the brightest minds and incorporating five agencies: the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), Department of Agriculture (MDA), Department of Conservation (MDC), DNR, and MSHP. The new state-of-the-art laboratory campus is expected to be completed in October 2026.



Governor Parson and officials break ground on new \$183 million multi-agency state laboratory in Jefferson City on June 27, 2024. From left: Jefferson City attorney Ryan Moehlman, Office of Administration Commissioner Ken Zellers, MDC Director Jason Sumners, DPS Director Sandy Karsten, MDA Director Chris Chinn, Governor Parson, DHSS Director Paula Nickelson, Senator Mike Bernskoetter, Representative Rudy Veit, and DNR Director Dru Buntin.

AGING WITH DIGNITY

In January 2023, Governor Parson signed Executive Order 23–01 to establish a Master Plan on Aging to help reduce age and disability discrimination, eliminate barriers to safe and healthy aging, and help Missourians to age with dignity. More than 1.1 million Missouri citizens are over the age of sixty, and estimates suggest older adults will outnumber minors for the first time by 2030 and older adults will greatly outnumber minors by 2060. Governor Parson tasked DHSS, with the assistance of a new advisory council, to develop a Master Plan on Aging for the State of Missouri that addressed a ten-year framework and provided a guiding vision for policies and programs to support for Missouri seniors.

The aim is by supporting older Missourians in their homes, not just in long-term care or nursing facilities, and improving access to services, the State of Missouri can help empower individuals as they age and lead to the more efficient use of Medicaid and other social programs. DHSS is tasked with finalizing the Master Plan on Aging by December 31, 2025, and releasing a public report.

REVOLUTIONIZING MISSOURI MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Both Governor Parson and First Lady Parson believed, wholeheartedly, that to create a better society, Missouri must do better in how it supports its most vulnerable. **All told, throughout the Parson administration, funding and support for mental health services and initiatives increased by nearly \$2 billion.** With this historic support, Missouri led new mental health initiatives and revolutionized existing programs and services.

Understanding the critical need to provide additional behavioral health care to those in need, Governor Parson and the Missouri legislature appropriated \$300 million in 2023 to build a new 225-bed inpatient psychiatric hospital in the Kansas City region.

The overall economic impact of the hospital is estimated at \$1.2 billion—including annual salaries, benefits, and expenses estimated at almost \$60 million per year. This includes both the construction of the hospital and its ongoing operation. Even more importantly, the hospital and emergency department will add critically needed behavioral health services for all four counties in Kansas City.

Leading the Nation: 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

In July 2022, a national campaign began to introduce the new, three-digit number, 988, available for any mental health, suicide, or substance use disorder crisis. Since the initial rollout, Missouri has invested \$38 million in federal funds and general revenue and has ranked consistently in the top ten among all states and territories for its in-state 988 call answer rate. In April 2024, Missouri achieved the fourth best answer rate (94 percent) out of fifty-six total states and territories. Among states and territories answering five thousand calls or more, Missouri was tied for the best answer rate.



988 SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE
MISSOURI

VETERANS PRESS 1

NEED SUPPORT?

**CALL, TEXT,
OR CHAT 988**



The Department of Mental Health (DMH) partners with DeafLEAD in Columbia, Missouri, to provide twenty-four/seven access to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline by text, chat, and videophone. The videophone allows individuals who identify as deaf, deaf/blind, deaf/disabled, hard of hearing, late-deafened, or any American Sign Language (ASL) user to connect directly to ASL-fluent 988 crisis specialists. DeafLEAD is one of two 988 videophone providers in the nation.

Veteran Suicide Prevention

Governor Parson remained proud to lead in a state where service members, veterans, and their families could find professional success, affordability, welcoming communities, and, above all, support and respect for their service to their great nation. In 2021, Governor Parson directed Missouri to become one of the first states to participate in the Governor's Challenge initiative. The program stemmed from a partnership between the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to bring together leaders in state and local governments to prevent suicide among service members, veterans, and their families. A nonpartisan state interagency team was created to embark on a process to collaborate, plan, and implement suicide prevention best practices and policies across Missouri.

In July 2024, Governor Parson signed Senate Bill 912 and House Bill 1495, which charged the Missouri Veterans Commission (MVC) with creating a new Veterans Mental Health Program to aid in the efforts to prevent veteran suicide. This legislation continued the state's commitment to the nation's heroes and that Missouri would remain one of the best places for veterans and service members to live, work, and raise a family.

ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL DIRECT CARE WORKFORCE CRISIS

During Governor Parson's administration, Missouri was the first state in the nation to develop a registered apprenticeship to address the national direct-care workforce shortage crisis. Through Missouri Talent Pathways, providers have access to technical assistance, workforce resources, recruiting incentives, and quality standards to increase staff acquisition and retention.

As of July 2024, there were twenty-two employer partners supporting more than 227 apprentices with ninety-three apprentices having earned their Certified Direct Support Credential, and the state is estimated to have saved more than \$1.58 million in staffing replacement costs.

MISSOURI AS A MODEL EMPLOYER

Expanding more job opportunities to individuals with a disability is critical to developing a state workforce that reflects the talents of all Missourians. In September 2019, Governor Parson signed an executive order announcing the commencement of the Missouri as a Model Employer initiative. The Model Employer classification is an emerging trend supported by the federal Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy to help more people with disabilities obtain competitive, integrated employment.

Just 79.8 percent of working-age individuals in Missouri without a disability are employed while only 37.1 percent of working-age individuals with a disability are employed. The Missouri as a Model Employer initiative aims to reduce this disparity by directing state government to serve as a model employer of individuals with disabilities through improved recruitment, hiring, and retention strategies.

MEDICAID VALUE-BASED PAYMENT TRANSFORMATION

Missouri was the first state in the nation to develop a federally approved Medicaid value-based payment (VBP) approach. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) approved two VBP specific initiatives: remote supports and fee-for-service Medicaid Long-Term Services and Supports (MLTSS).

Efforts to enhance people's lives, by recognizing their ability and desire to live as independently as possible, led to embracing remote support technology and delivery. The Division of Developmental Disabilities developed a VBP for providers who realize a cost avoidance for the state through the implementation of remote supports. Since implementation, nineteen providers have participated in the VBP for eighty-two people. The cost avoidance for these individuals exceeded \$5.8 million; the reduction in more than 171,400 hours of in-person service delivery avoided the cost of 82.4 FTE. Those supports were reallocated to serve others in need.

Missouri also became the first state in the nation to begin a comprehensive VBP transformation of MLTSS through building the best practices, capacity, and infrastructure at the state executive agency level. The Missouri model also had a clear objective of ensuring the cost savings of well-managed care does not become part of a profit margin for a managed care organization, but rather it created the most efficient use of tax dollars.

MISSOURI AUTISM CENTERS

Throughout their time in public service, Governor Parson and First Lady Parson focused on increasing support for Missouri's vulnerable populations, including children and adults with autism. Throughout the Parson administration, nearly \$30 million in additional funding was secured for services and supports to assist individuals with autism and their families in Missouri:

- \$10 million increased capacity for Missouri Autism Centers to provide evaluation and diagnostic services and reduce the length of time individuals are waiting for an evaluation.
- \$15 million was contributed to capital improvement projects to expand access to services and supports in St. Louis, Springfield, and Joplin.
- \$5 million advanced research and development of therapeutics and potential cures for cases of genetically caused autism.
- \$1 million educated, trained, and mentored professionals to develop and expand local expertise and access to services for individuals with autism in rural and underserved communities.
- \$500,000 for additional evaluation and diagnostic services in rural areas of Missouri.

HEALTH ASSESSMENT AND CONSULTATION SERVICE

Missouri was the leading state in the development of a new health assessment and consultation Medicaid waiver service called Station MD. It served to empower individuals to expedite medical care and reduce unnecessary emergency room visits (as well as potential hospital admissions) so individuals could be treated in the comfort of their familiar surroundings. The service offered immediate virtual access to high-quality emergency physicians specifically trained in the care of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The service was available twenty-four/seven as a resource for individuals, families, or staff to call if they have a medically related concern about an individual. Numerous states around the country moved to adopt this service and the CMS asked Missouri's leaders to present jointly at a national conference.

Community Behavioral Health Liaisons and Youth Behavioral Health Liaisons

Community Behavioral Health Liaisons (CBHLs) assisted law enforcement and the courts in addressing the behavioral health issues of individuals who come to the attention of the justice system in Missouri. The CBHL model saved valuable resources that might otherwise be expended on unnecessary jail, prison, and hospital stays and improved outcomes for individuals with behavioral health issues by connecting them to services, if appropriate. In fiscal year 2023, CBHLs received 21,090 referrals from law enforcement, courts, and jails. Of those referrals, 12,462 individuals were referred to behavioral health services. In 2019, 2022, and 2023, Missouri CBHLs were recognized at the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) International Conference for Behavioral Health Practitioner of the Year Awards.

In 2022, seeing the success of the CBHL program, Governor Parson's administration launched a similar program for youth given the national data and state level concerns about the worsening mental health of young people. Youth Behavioral Health Liaisons (YBHLs) were behavioral health professionals who provide diversionary interventions to youth and their families to avoid unnecessary trips to emergency rooms, hospitalizations, detention, or negative educational outcomes. YBHLs worked with schools, treatment providers, juvenile justice, and other youth-serving agencies to assist youth and educate about behavioral health concerns. In fiscal year 2024, there were 5,951 referrals to YBHLs. Generally, about a third of the referrals came from schools, closely followed by law enforcement. Most referrals were connected to mental health treatment.

Governor Parson highlighted the success of the program in his 2023 State of the State Address and called for additional funding to benefit more Missouri children. By 2024, there were forty-one YBHLs providing services to all 114 counties in Missouri and the city of St. Louis.

MATERNAL MORTALITY PREVENTION

During Governor Parson's 2023 State of the State Address, he declared it was unacceptable and embarrassing for Missouri to be ranked near the bottom when it comes to maternal care and he committed to taking action. At the time, the DHSS estimated 75 percent of maternal deaths were preventable with at least one meaningful change to treatment, whether directly to the patient or through the provider, community, or health-care system. The governor recognized the need to do better and instructed

DHSS to implement a new plan that will lead to better health outcomes for Missouri mothers and babies and support their care after childbirth to reduce maternal mortality.

In July 2023, Governor Parson signed into law a bill that extends health-care coverage for new moms from sixty days to a full year postpartum. More than half of the states had already made this change and noted a resulting decrease in maternal deaths. The postpartum period is critical for recovering from childbirth, addressing complications of delivery, ensuring mental health, managing infant care, and transitioning from obstetric to primary care. For those who experienced pregnancy-related complications or those with conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure, this extension of care is particularly important. Additionally, postpartum depression and suicidal tendencies that may be experienced by pregnant or postpartum women further emphasize the need for extended access to care. By opening the door to this vital postpartum care, the governor has instituted a policy change that will address disparities in maternal health outcomes and have a positive impact on the health and well-being of Missouri mothers and babies for years to come.



On September 7, 2023, Governor Parson joins Senator Lauren Arthur (front row in red) and University of Missouri–Kansas City physicians, residents, and health students in Kansas City for a ceremonial signing of Senate Bill 106 expanding MO HealthNet care for pregnant and postpartum women and House Bill 10, giving \$4.85 million to improve and provide higher quality maternal/postpartum care.



Governor Parson jokes with St. Louis Communications Liaison Jared Hankinson after the Gateway Studios & Production Services ground breaking in Chesterfield on November 11, 2021.



CHAPTER SEVEN

MISSOURI ECONOMY

When Governor Parson was sworn in as Missouri's fifty-seventh governor, the economic challenges Missouri faced seemed daunting. That day, he pledged to revitalize Missouri's economy and create a prosperous future for all. Throughout his administration, Governor Parson was always more interested in giving back Missourians' hard-earned dollars than spending them, a philosophy that spurred job creation, business growth, and increased state revenues. Under his leadership, Missouri achieved the states lowest unemployment rate ever recorded; implemented five significant tax cuts, including the largest in the state's history; and saw major business announcements that bolstered economic confidence. Trade missions showcased Missouri as an ideal place for business, encouraging companies to invest and grow within the state. Apprenticeships and workforce development initiatives became cornerstones of the state's economic strategy, contributing to the remarkable gross domestic product (GDP) growth and earning Missouri a top ranking for economic performance. Enhanced broadband access and increased tourism, jobs, and investment further solidified Missouri's economic foundation. With a prestigious AAA bond rating, the Parson administration steered Missouri towards growth and stability, putting people first and ensuring a bright economic future for all Missourians.

BEST IN THE MIDWEST

In 2018, Missouri ranked forty-third in GDP growth and last among its midwestern neighbors. Missouri's economic growth averaged 1 percent annually from 2013 to 2018, while national GDP grew by 3.4 percent. Governor Parson was not satisfied with this dismal performance and set out to revitalize the state's economy with a Best in the Midwest initiative. This initiative led to the issuance of Executive Orders 19-01, -02, and -03, marking the most significant restructuring of state government in decades.

A central component of this transformation was the overhaul of the Missouri Department of Economic Development (DED). Previously the largest and least-focused midwestern economic development agency, the department was streamlined into a ready-to-win team dedicated to driving economic growth. This restructuring involved consolidating functions to increase efficiency, reducing the agency's size by 76 percent. The executive orders reassigned existing staff to dedicate more resources to business development statewide; addressed Missouri's growing workforce challenges by also restructuring the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (DHEWD); called for the creation of Missouri One Start, which was a new division of DED dedicated solely to connecting businesses with skilled workers; and better aligned certain policy areas with other state agencies.

Combined, these efforts helped Missouri to begin to improve. From 2018 to 2023, Missouri's average annual GDP growth nearly doubled, which put Missouri more in step with national GDP growth at about 1.7 percent. Thanks to Governor Parson's leadership, when he left office, Missouri stood at twenty-seventh in the nation and among the top five in the Midwest for GDP growth, a dramatic improvement from forty-third nationally and last among its neighbors when Governor Parson took the helm of state government in 2018.

HISTORIC TAX CUTS

Governor Parson's commitment to growing the economy and to giving back Missourians' hard-earned dollars was underscored by the implementation of three major income tax cuts during his terms, creating jobs, business growth, and increased revenues to the state. The first cut in 2019 reduced the individual income tax rate by 0.5 percent from 5.9 percent to 5.4 percent, allowing Missourians to keep more of their earnings and encouraging consumer spending.

A second cut in 2022 further decreased the income tax rate to 5.3 percent, providing additional relief to taxpayers and stimulating economic activity. At the time, the nation faced record inflation, historically high gas prices, and rising food costs, and Missouri was no exception. In an effort to stimulate the economy and provide temporary relief, the Missouri General Assembly passed House Bill 2090. For those who had tax liability in 2021, House Bill 2090 authorized one-time \$500 tax rebates for individuals making less \$150,000 per year and \$1,000 rebates for joint filers making less than \$300,000 per year. Since the rebates on tax liability were pro-rated due to



Governor Parson signs House Bill 2540, the first historic income tax cut during his administration, at Hartman & Company Inc. in Springfield on July 12, 2018. From left: Senator Bob Dixon, Senator Jay Wasson, Representative Jay Eggleston, Representative Curtis Trent, Hartman & Company Executive Vice President Mary Beth Hartman, House Speaker Pro Tem Elijah Haahr, Representative Lynn Morris, Governor Parson, Senator Bill Eigel, Representative Steve Helms, and Representative Mike Stephens.

“Every Missourian can support sending less of their money to the government, and we trust Missourians to make decisions with their own money. Throughout my career, I’ve committed to exploring every opportunity to reduce Missourians’ tax burden, and thanks to our strong financial position and balanced approach, the time is now. This historic tax cut means more money for Missourians to spend, invest, and save. It means economic growth, business expansions, and good-paying jobs for Missourians both today and tomorrow.”

—Governor Parson



Governor Parson ceremonially signs Senate Bills 3 and 5, the largest income tax cut in state history, at the NUCOR Corporation steel plant in Sedalia on November 2, 2022.

the program being underfunded, no taxpayer would receive the advertised maximum rebate. Many working Missourians, including low-income earners, high-income earners, and vulnerable populations, were left out of this temporary relief measure entirely. In response, Governor Parson vetoed the legislation and called for a special session, proposing permanent tax relief for all taxpaying Missourians. The governor wanted to provide permanent tax relief that provides yearly savings to Missourians, as opposed to a one-time stimulus. This historic special session concluded with the passage of the largest income tax cut in the Missouri's history, cutting the tax rate and simplifying the tax code, specifically:

- Reducing the top individual income tax rate from 5.3 to 4.95 percent, resulting in the majority of taxpaying Missourians seeing an approximately 5 percent decrease in their tax liability;
- Eliminating the bottom income tax bracket, allowing Missourians to earn their first \$1,000 tax free;
- Allowing an additional 0.15 percent top income tax rate reduction to 4.8 percent when net general revenues increase by \$175 million, which was achieved in fiscal year 2023;

- Eliminating income taxes for individuals making less than \$13,000 a year and couples making less than \$26,000; and
- Allowing three additional 0.1 percent top income tax rate reductions in future years when net general revenue increases by \$200 million, adjusted for inflation. (The first reduction was achieved with fiscal year 2024 growth. The top individual income tax rate will decline to 4.7 percent for tax year 2025.)

Under Governor Parson's leadership, Missourians' income taxes were reduced five times, totaling a 20 percent cut. At the same time, state revenue collections surged by 40 percent, largely driven by significant sales revenue.

When Governor Parson's term ended, Missouri's income tax rate stood at 4.7 percent, positioning Missouri with the eleventh lowest tax burden in the nation.

During the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce's annual State of the State event, Governor Parson announces a historic fifth income tax cut.



BUSINESS GROWTH/NEW JOBS

Missouri emerged as an ideal destination for business and investment. Not only does Missouri offer an economically diverse central location in the heart of the United States, but it also boasts of a pro-business attitude, toting low taxes, minimal regulation, and a AAA bond rating. Governor Parson's administration capitalized on these strengths to propel the state forward, creating a prosperous economy for current and future generations.

Missouri offered one of the lowest tax burdens in the country, making it financially advantageous for businesses to take root in the state. In fact, under Governor Parson's leadership, Missouri ranked second in the nation for low cost of doing business. Governor Parson's common-sense approach led Missouri into financial stability. Missouri's strong financial health was reflected in its AAA bond rating, the highest rating possible and recognized by all three major credit rating agencies: Moody's Analytics, S&P Global Rating, and Fitch Ratings. Every year of its term, the Parson administration maintained the state's AAA rating, which signaled fiscal responsibility and stability and projected confidence to investors and businesses considering long-term commitments with Missouri. Only fifteen states in the nation had a similar AAA rating.

WAYFAIR LEGISLATION

In 2018, the US Supreme Court's decision in *South Dakota v. Wayfair, Inc.* allowed states to adopt rules to collect sales and use taxes from businesses not physically located in their state but who sell and deliver products into the state. At the time, Missouri businesses were losing sales because out-of-state, online retailers were not subject to the same state sales tax laws as local businesses. The system also burdened Missouri businesses because they were required to remit sales and use taxes to other states, but out-of-state businesses selling to Missourians did not.

Supporting Missouri small business owners by passing Wayfair legislation was a priority of the Parson administration. On June 30, 2021, Governor Parson signed Senate Bills 153 and 97 into law, allowing Missouri and local jurisdictions to collect an online use tax to help protect Missouri's brick and mortar businesses. Following forty-nine other states and Washington, DC, Missouri was the final state to implement an economic nexus law. The new law helped even the playing field between Missouri small businesses and large out-of-state retailers. With more than 549,000 small businesses in Missouri, Governor Parson felt it was time Missouri established a twenty-first-century tax code benefiting Main Street businesses rather than companies that didn't invest in local communities or employ Missouri citizens.

SHOW ME MO BUSINESSES

Governor Parson prioritized workforce development and infrastructure to ensure Missouri was an inviting destination for business investment and expansion and to ultimately create more quality job opportunities for Missourians. Under his administration, Missouri achieved resounding success.



Governor Parson and Casey's General Stores Inc. President and CEO Darren Rebelez head out to cut the ribbon for Casey's new \$40 million distribution facility in Joplin, creating 125 new jobs, on April 15, 2021.



Governor Parson and executives from Swift Prepared Foods cut the ribbon on a new \$68 million facility in Moberly, creating two hundred new jobs, on May 24, 2021.



Governor Parson delivers remarks at the announcement of the General Motors \$1.5 billion investment at the Wentzville Assembly Plant on December 13, 2019.

Throughout Governor Parson's six years in office, business projects supported with state incentives through the DED totaled nearly seven hundred, including both new investments and expansions of existing businesses that utilized programs like Missouri One Start and Missouri Works. These DED projects alone contributed more than \$16 billion in new business investment and more than fifty-seven thousand new jobs to the state's economy.

Under Governor Parson's leadership, Missouri netted new businesses of all sizes, from Main Street mom-and-pops to Fortune 500s. In Missouri, all are welcome. Some of the larger business expansions include:

- General Motors – Wentzville – In December 2019, GM announced its decision to invest \$1.5 billion and retain nearly four thousand jobs at its Wentzville facility. At the time, the Wentzville plant already supported nearly 12,250 jobs throughout Missouri's economy and generated more than \$2 billion in GDP annually. Out of the state's more than 225 automotive suppliers, 178 supplied GM, accounting for more than \$700 million spent by GM on Missouri suppliers.
- Chewy Inc. – Belton – During the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in July 2020, Chewy Inc. announced plans to open a new 800,000-square-foot eCommerce fulfillment center in Belton, Missouri, and create more than 1,200 new jobs.



Governor Parson at the announcement of Meta's \$800 million investment for a hyperscale data center in Kansas City on March 24, 2022. From left: Missouri Partnership CEO Subash Alias, Kansas City Area Development Council President and CEO Tim Cowden, Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas, Meta Senior Director of Global Community and Economic Development Darcy Nothnagle, Governor Parson, Kansas City Councilmember Teresa Loar, DED Acting Director Maggie Kost. (Photo by Morgan Miller Photography)

- Meta Platforms Inc. – Kansas City – In March 2022, Meta Platforms Inc. (Meta), formerly known as Facebook Inc., announced it will locate a nearly one-million-square-foot data center in Kansas City, investing more than \$800 million and supporting up to one hundred jobs.
- Google – Kansas City – In March 2024, Google announced it would locate a new data center in Kansas City, investing \$1 billion and supporting up to 1,300 jobs. The data center, the company's first in Missouri, would accompany contributions from Google to the region's workforce and energy infrastructure.
- Kansas City National Security Campus (KCNSC) – Kansas City – In July 2024, Governor Parson signed Senate Bill 1388 authorizing state and local tax exemptions for business expansion operations at KCNSC. As a result, KCNSC was expected to invest \$2.5 billion and add over two thousand new jobs in the following years.



Governor Parson, First Lady Parson, and the Missouri trade delegation after a meeting with EGA in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, during the governor's fourth international trade mission on November 16, 2022.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Governor Parson's focus on bringing economic opportunity to Missourians wasn't just focused on domestic businesses. Throughout his time in office, Governor Parson led ten trade delegations abroad to bring overseas businesses to Missouri. Trade mission destinations included France, Germany, and Switzerland, June/July 2019; Australia, August 2019; United Kingdom and Ireland, March 2022; Germany and the Netherlands, July 2022; Israel, United Arab Emirates, and Greece, November 2022; Germany and Sweden, March 2023; Japan, October 2023; Italy, May 2024; United Kingdom and Belgium, July 2024; and Panama, August 2024.

Governor Parson also led a trade delegation to San Francisco, California, in 2019 to meet with Bay Area technology executives. Two companies Governor Parson engaged with and actively recruited to Missouri were Meta and Google, each now having announced major investments in the Kansas City area.

In total, Governor Parson's trade missions, both foreign and domestic, directly resulted in more than 1,500 new jobs and \$3 billion in business investment for the state of Missouri.



On June 21, 2023, Governor Parson, Hunt Midwest President and CEO Ora Reynolds, and Mayor Quinton Lucas break ground on the KCI 29 Logistics Park in Kansas City, Missouri, a 20-million square-foot industrial site that will attract more than nine thousand jobs and \$2.5 billion in capital investment to the region.

JOBS, JOBS, AND MORE JOBS

Like Governor Parson's hand of leadership, Missouri's unemployment rate and job creation remained steady. After a short-term spike to 11.6 percent due to disruptions caused by COVID-19, Missouri's unemployment rate hovered around 3 percent for the majority of the Parson administration. However, in June 2022, another historic milestone was reached when Missouri achieved its lowest unemployment rate ever recorded at 2.1 percent. During Governor Parson's administration, Missouri's unemployment rate stayed well below the national average.

More often than not, month after month, Missouri saw positive job growth. All told, including two years of negative COVID-19 impacts, since June 2018, Missouri experienced sixty-one months of positive job growth out of Governor Parson's eighty-month administration. As of June 2024, more than 175,000 jobs were added to Missouri's economy over the course of the Parson administration. During the same time period, Missouri ranked fifteenth nationally for job creation and outpaced seven of its eight bordering states for job creation.

Additionally, Missouri is a manufacturing powerhouse. This was true before Governor Parson's administration but was unleashed even further during his time in office. During his six years as governor, Missouri added nearly nineteen thousand new manufacturing jobs, ranking the state seventh nationally. Missouri ranked number one among its eight neighboring states for manufacturing job creation.



Governor Parson helps break ground on ICL Group's \$400 million battery materials manufacturing plant in St. Louis on August 8, 2023, marking the creation of more than 125 high-paying jobs. From left: ICL President of Phosphate Specialties Solutions and Managing Director of North America Phil Brown, City of St. Louis Mayor's Office Chief of Staff L. Jared Boyd, ICL CEO Raviv Zoller, Department of Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm, Governor Parson, ICL Executive Chairman Yoav Doppelt, and Greater St. Louis Inc. CEO Jason Hall.

Throughout his administration, Governor Parson's efforts focused on ensuring good-paying jobs for Missourians. His priorities culminated in Missouri's designation as the number one state for job growth in April 2024, surpassing all other states including population giants like Texas and Florida.

RANKINGS

During the Parson years, Missouri went from being "lucky to be in the middle of the pack in anything" to leading in many key economic rankings and indicators as determined by governmental, private industry, and news service organizations alike. Missouri achieved top ten ranks in the United States in the categories listed below:

- First for job growth
- Second for on-the-job training participants
- Second for cost of doing business
- Third for apprenticeships
- Third for best Business Tax Index
- Third for best Unemployment Insurance Tax Index

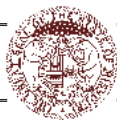
- Fourth for best state to retire
- Fourth for affordability
- Fourth for best taxpayer return on investment
- Fourth for new business expansion
- Fifth for workforce training
- Sixth for tech employee diversity
- Sixth for cost of living
- Eighth for small business wage growth
- Ninth for business creation
- Ninth for affordable housing
- Ninth for best Property Tax Index
- Ninth for the automotive industry
- Ninth for lowest tax burden
- Tenth for tech manufacturing job change



Governor Parson ceremonially signs House Bill 417 at Greater St. Louis Inc.'s headquarters in St. Louis, commemorating the creation of the Intern and Apprentice Recruiting Act on August 8, 2023.



"She's Old But She Still Works" by Pamela Thompson.



CHAPTER EIGHT

MISSOURI'S AGRICULTURE GOVERNOR

While the view from this dais facing all of you is a fine sight to see, it's no comparison to the view of the Polk County fields behind the windshield of my John Deere tractor.

—Governor Parson
2024 State of the State Address

As is the case for many Missourians, agriculture was a constant in the life of Missouri's fifty-seventh governor. Born to parents who were sharecroppers, Governor Parson is a third-generation farmer who maintained an active cow-calf farming operation throughout his public service career, including while serving as Missouri's governor. While Governor Parson never gave preferential treatment to agriculture, with his unique experience and farmer's perspective, he always ensured agriculture got a fair deal. Throughout the Parson administration, there were times the governor was doubted, but when the dust settled, Missouri agriculture always came out on top and the accolades of Missouri's "Agriculture Governor" were undisputed.

CULTIVATING OPPORTUNITY, REAPING SUCCESS

Throughout his administration, Governor Parson focused on leveraging Missouri's low taxes, business-friendly environment, central location, and strong capacity for agricultural trade to bring businesses to Missouri and retain them. A global leader in the ag-tech sector, Missouri's \$93.7 billion agriculture industry employed more than 460,000 workers statewide, all of which utilized the state's crop and livestock diversity, abundant water supply, rich soil, and cutting-edge animal health and plant science clusters to propel the industry forward. Leading companies recognized the opportunity

in Missouri, and in 2019, Bayer announced it was relocating five hundred new, high-paying jobs to Creve Coeur, Missouri, with an average wage of \$110,000 and a capital investment of \$164 million. The announcement came after Governor Parson's first European trade mission, where he traveled internationally to highlight Missouri as an ideal location for business and encourage new investment in the state. The trade mission included a stop in Germany to meet with Bayer CEO Werner Baumann.



Governor Parson toured the new Bayer campus in Chesterfield on March 20, 2019, as Bayer is one of Missouri's top thirty private sector employers with a strong connection to the state's agricultural industry. From left: Bayer Crop Science Operations Management Lead Ed Fischer; MDA Director Chris Chinn; Congresswoman Ann Wagner; and Governor Parson.



Governor Parson discusses improvements to agriculture and new challenges for farmers at the Robinson Cotton Gin in Holland on August 29, 2019.

Additionally, in 2019, agriculture giant Bunge announced the relocation of its global headquarters from White Plains, New York, to the St. Louis metropolitan area, increasing the company's presence in the state.

In 2021, American Foods Group (AFG) selected Warren County for a new state-of-the-art beef processing facility. In fall 2022, Governor Parson participated in the ground-breaking ceremony for the 775,000-square-foot facility, which was predicted to generate \$1 billion in annual economic impact in Missouri and create more than 1,300 new jobs with an annual payroll of \$80 million. Upon completion, the facility is expected to have the capacity to process 2,400 cattle per day, creating an unprecedented Missouri market destination for more Missouri farmers and ranchers.



Governor Parson participates in the ground breaking for American Foods Group meat packing production expansion in Warren County on September 12, 2022.

While business investments and expansions, especially in the agriculture sector, became the norm under Governor Parson's administration, the success didn't just stop in the private sector. In 2019, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced it would be relocating its Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) agencies to Kansas City.



Governor Parson and Secretary Sonny Perdue discuss the USDA's Economic Research Service and National Institute of Food and Agriculture agencies' new relocation from DC to Kansas City on November 15, 2019. From left: Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas, Governor Parson, Representative Jerome Barnes, USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue, and US Senator Roy Blunt.

The move from Washington, DC, pledged to bring an estimated 250 agriculture jobs paying an average of \$120,000 per year at ERS and 320 agriculture jobs paying an average of \$116,000 per year at NIFA to the Kansas City area. Within three hundred miles of Kansas City are thirteen land-grant universities, as well as top research universities that have graduated more than 150 PhDs in agriculture-related fields in recent years. Throughout its selection process, the USDA identified Kansas City as an ideal location for ERS and NIFA employees because of the region's affordability, capacity for growth, easy commutes, and extraordinary livability, among other factors.

FERTILIZING THE FUTURE

In 2022, Governor Parson announced a total of \$10 million in Agriculture Innovation & Workforce Development Awards to six Missouri higher education institutions for workforce development projects. Funds from the Agriculture Innovation & Workforce Development Award could be used for outreach and recruitment efforts, professional and curriculum development, construction/renovation, and the purchase of equipment.

Helping the next generations of Missouri farmers and ranchers was especially important to Governor Parson, but he understood the struggle for new or beginning farmers to get started. It deeply concerned him, and he wanted to do more to help. In 2024, Governor Parson signed House Bill 1803, increasing the amount of state funds the Missouri treasurer may invest in the MOBUCK\$ program to assist more beginning farmers, existing farmers, and small businesses with low-interest loans. The program cap was increased from \$800 million to \$1.2 billion annually.

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

In response to some zoning commissions and county health boards passing rules and regulations that created burdensome hurdles for certain agricultural operations, Governor Parson signed Senate Bill 391 to ensure local standards or requirements for agricultural operations in Missouri could not be more stringent than state laws, rules, or regulations.

Additionally, during a time when heightened activity by anti-agriculture activist groups disguising themselves to target and embarrass legitimate farming operations was on the rise, Governor Parson signed House Bill 574, limiting agriculture inspection authority to only those with statutory and regulatory reason to do so, including the Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA), Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR), USDA, and county sheriffs.



Governor Parson ceremonially signs Senate Bill 391 alongside farmer families and agricultural leaders at the annual Missouri Cattlemen's Steak Fry in Sedalia on June 8, 2019.

As a farmer himself, Governor Parson also uniquely understood the importance of protecting personal property rights. House Bill 2005, guaranteeing fair protections for farm families, tightened the use of eminent domain and ensured the interests of Missouri farmers were always considered and balanced with the public good. In addition to adding certain stipulations for electrical utilities to seek the use of eminent domain, House Bill 2005 increased the compensation rate for agricultural or horticultural land to 150 percent of the fair market value and required in related condemnation proceedings at least one member must be a local farmer who has operated in the county for at least ten years.



Governor Parson speaks to students during a visit to Clay Farms to celebrate its 204th anniversary and Missouri's bicentennial on August 5, 2021.

SAFEGUARDING THE AGRICULTURE WAY OF LIFE FOR THE NEXT GENERATIONS

Governor Parson always sought to do what is right and what is fair for all Missourians. Whether it was K–12 education, big communities, small communities, private business, or Missouri farmers and ranchers, if Governor Parson thought Missourians were getting a bad deal, he spoke up. In 2022, the general assembly, among its crippling infighting, passed House Bill 1720, extending several agricultural tax credit programs for just two years. What was seen as a compromise measure to pass legislation actually compromised the value of the programs and the vitality of Missouri's farming and ranching operations.

These two-year extensions were problematic because applicants often need a minimum of twenty-four months in order to secure the equity and private investment needed for projects. At the same time Missouri agriculture was drawing the short straw, the general assembly authorized sunsets for other private business programs that were three and four times longer than those for Missouri's agriculture programs.



Governor Parson and MDA Director Chris Chinn celebrate Beef Month in Missouri at the Kansas City Cattle Company in Parkville on May 4, 2023.

When elected leaders and interested lobbying groups were telling Governor Parson the situation was somewhat insignificant, he stood tall for Missouri agriculture. During the September 2022 veto session, Governor Parson called legislators into a special session and asked them to right this wrong for Missouri farmers and ranchers. In the end, Governor Parson and Missouri agriculture were victorious and achieved:

- Extending the sunset on agriculture tax credits included in House Bill 1720 for a minimum of six years rather than two;
- Exempting certain agricultural equipment from state and local sales tax; and
- Modifying the Family Farms Act to increase the number of small farmers that qualify for the program and increasing the amount of loans available to the farmer.

Protecting Missouri's Farm Land from Bad Actors

In early 2024, before the convening of the regular legislative session of the Missouri General Assembly, Governor Parson took action to protect Missouri farmland from foreign adversaries like China. This action was in response to rising concerns that China and other bad actors could use Missouri farmland to compromise both state and national security interests. The general assembly had failed year after year to take any meaningful action, so Governor Parson used the authority he had within the Missouri Constitution and laws of the State of Missouri to do something when others did nothing.

Governor Parson issued Executive Order 24-01, which banned individuals and businesses from nations designated as foreign adversaries from purchasing agricultural land within a ten-mile radius of critical military facilities in the state of Missouri. In Missouri, foreign agricultural land purchases were capped at 1 percent of the total agricultural land across the state, as outlined in state statute Section 442.571, RSMo. Executive Order 24-01 created more stringent requirements for these land purchases and required approval from the MDA prior to any foreign acquisitions of agricultural land. The order also required disclosing certain information to MDA prior to any foreign entity acquiring Missouri agricultural land.

These additional requirements helped inform MDA personnel as to whether agricultural land purchased by a foreign alien or business should be approved or denied. Governor Parson also included funding in his fiscal year 2024 supplemental budget and his fiscal year 2025 budget to ensure MDA had the necessary resources and staff to enforce these protections.

Knowing his authority and subsequent order were limited, Governor Parson made it clear it was up to the general assembly to expand restrictions on foreign purchases. However, he stressed any expansion should be limited to foreign adversaries only, as foreign investment by ally nations totaled nearly \$19 billion and directly supported close to 150,000 Missouri jobs.

Opponents called the order weak, saying it didn't do enough. They vowed to pass total bans. In the end, they came up with no resolution and achieved nothing to protect Missouri farmland. When Governor Parson left office, his executive order was the only law of its kind on the books safeguarding Missouri farmers, ranchers, and military assets from adversarial nations.

State Fair Support

It is no secret the Missouri State Fair held a special significance for Governor Parson, reflecting his deep connection to agriculture outside of the political arena. From tractor pulls and livestock showcases to culinary



Governor and First Lady Parson enjoy the Governor's Ham Breakfast at the Missouri State Fair in Sedalia on August 15, 2019.



Governor Parson and MDA Director Chris Chinn (front, far left) meet with Missouri 4-H State Officers at the Missouri State Fair on August 18, 2022.

competitions and educational exhibits, the fair draws participants and visitors from around the state and fosters a deeper appreciation for Missouri agriculture's impact.

Recognizing the fair as a crucial platform for showcasing the state's agriculture prowess, Governor Parson made it a priority to upgrade and enhance the fairgrounds throughout his administration. These efforts underscored his commitment to the agriculture sector, which he views as the backbone of Missouri's economy and cultural heritage. By investing in the state fair, Governor Parson aimed to support farmers and ranchers, promote agriculture education, and attract national events to the fairgrounds, ensuring the fair remains a vibrant celebration of Missouri's rural roots.

In 2019, Governor Parson joined the Missouri State Fair Commission and NUCOR Corporation for the Director's Pavilion ground breaking, the governor's first state fair upgrade. The NUCOR Director's Pavilion was a 100-foot by 100-foot steel structure with a concrete floor, and its construction eliminated the need to rent temporary tents for large events during the Missouri State Fair. In addition to state fair events, the pavilion was used for many offseason functions and activities.

Understanding the high demand for camping at the fair and the limited number of campsites, Governor Parson oversaw the start of construction of a new campground in August 2024, adding 160 campsites equipped



Governor Parson talks tractor implements with First Lady Parson, MDA Director Chris Chinn, and 2022–2023 Missouri FFA President Colton Roy at the Missouri State Fair in Sedalia on August 18, 2022.



Governor Parson listens as an FFA student asks a question during Congressman Mark Alford's agriculture listening session on the farm bill at the state fairgrounds in Sedalia on August 14, 2023. From left: Congresswoman Monica De La Cruz, Congressman Jonathan Jackson, Congressman Blaine Luetkemeyer, Congressman Glenn Thompson, Congressman Mark Alford, Governor Parson, Lieutenant Governor Mike Kehoe, and MDA Director Chris Chinn.

with water, sewer, and electricity. This expansion, funded with \$9.4 million allocated from the more than \$47 million budgeted in fiscal year 2023 for state fair improvements, will not only help meet the needs of fairgoers but also attract large events to the fairgrounds throughout the year, contributing to the local economy.

Governor Parson's commitment to revitalizing the Missouri State Fairgrounds was reflected in the extensive upgrades to its livestock facilities. He ensured the renovation of the Sheep Pavilion, one of the most used livestock structures on the fairgrounds, which included a new roof system; upgraded electric and plumbing systems; and remodeled office spaces, sleeping quarters, and restrooms. Similarly, Governor Parson prioritized the renovation of the historic Shorthorn Barn, which included a new roof, upgraded electricity, new concrete flooring, and essential masonry repairs to address water infiltration, preserving this important structure for generations.

When Governor Parson took office, most of the maintenance buildings were nearly eighty years old and in poor condition. He recognized the need for modern facilities and approved the construction of a new maintenance facility. Once completed, the new building housed twelve full-time staff

members and up to forty seasonal staff, as well as assisted with the efficiency and productivity of the Missouri State Fair maintenance staff.

Governor Parson initiated the construction of a new indoor climate-controlled arena, designed to seat up to seven thousand spectators. During a ground-breaking ceremony in August 2024, the Missouri State Fair Commission announced the arena will be named the Governor Michael L. Parson Arena, recognizing the governor's dedication to the Missouri State Fair. This state-of-the-art facility was designed to host national and regional events throughout the year, which are projected to bring substantial economic benefits to the area.

To secure growth and allow for future expansion, Governor Parson spearheaded the purchase of 201 acres adjacent to the Missouri State Fairgrounds. This would ultimately provide an additional six hundred new campsites, which attract offseason events to the area, significantly boosting the local economy.

Through these substantial upgrades, Governor Parson demonstrated his dedication to the Missouri State Fair's mission of promoting excellence in Missouri agriculture, cultivating and supporting future leaders in agriculture, and providing opportunities for the agricultural community to deepen consumers' understanding and appreciation of agriculture's role in their daily lives and Missouri's economy.



Governor Parson and his family celebrate the new Governor Michael L. Parson Arena at the Missouri State Fair on August 16, 2024. From left: Governor Parson, Ike Parson, First Lady Parson, and Kent Parson.

GOING GREEN: GOVERNOR PARSON DRIVES TRACTOR TO WORK

February often brings the deep freeze and unpredictability of Missouri winter, but during the Parson administration, one event became a constant at the Missouri State Capitol: Drive Your Tractor to Work Day. Every February, National FFA Week is celebrated by more than twenty-six thousand Missouri FFA students across the state. In addition to issuing a proclamation recognizing National FFA Week in Missouri, Governor Parson went a step further and began the tradition of driving his tractor, unapologetically John Deere, to the state capitol in honor of the long-standing tradition of Missouri FFA students who drive their tractors to school throughout the week.

Governor Parson and Lieutenant Governor Mike Kehoe, joined by the president and first vice president of the Missouri FFA Association, began the tractor parade at the Missouri Governor's Mansion, drove around the state capitol, and then ended on the South Lawn where they would speak to hundreds of Missouri FFA students in attendance. In its final year, Governor Parson expanded the event to include restored tractors from select FFA chapters across the state.



Governor and First Lady Parson pose with FFA State Officers in front of a John Deere 6110M before the governor drove the tractor from the Missouri Governor's Mansion to the capitol in celebration of National FFA Week on February 28, 2020.



First Lady Parson recognizes the Month of the Military Child along with students from Waynesville R-VI on April 6, 2022.



CHAPTER NINE

FIRST LADY TERESA PARSON: A HEART FOR MISSOURI CHILDREN

“We need to give children all the time they need for nurturing. Never let a day go by without quality one-on-one time. If there is still time for volunteerism, try to find activities that the children may participate in. This will also teach them the value of reaching out to others.”

—First Lady Parson

As the wife of Missouri’s fifty-seventh governor, First Lady Teresa Parson brought to her role the experience of being a mother, grandmother, businesswoman, volunteer, and advocate. After working forty years in the banking industry, she retired to continue serving her community. First Lady Parson is the proud mother of two children, six grandchildren, and two great-grandsons. First Lady Parson has a heart for Missouri children and believes they are important to the future of Missouri; therefore, she chose them as the focus of the following initiatives.

MOVING MISSOURI FORWARD FOUNDATION

Established by First Lady Parson in 2022, the Moving Missouri Forward Foundation (MMFF) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) entity designed to support the children of Missouri through initiatives such as Jobs for America’s Graduates–Missouri Inc. (JAG), specific programs for those with special needs, and other projects focused on Missouri’s children. First Lady Parson has always believed children are the next generation of leaders, and when young people are set up for success, Missouri communities will experience those benefits.

MMFF signature events:

- Holiday Tea and Tour at the Mansion, Christmas 2022
- The Perfect Pair Valentine's Reception at the Mansion, February 2023
- Piano Concert at the Mansion, September 2023
- Wild Game Dinner and Auction at the Mansion, September 2023 and 2024
- Fancy Nancy Tea Party at the Mansion, April 2024
- Net earnings from the sales of Governor Parson's biography *No Turnin' Back*, March 2024 to present

First Lady Parson welcomes children to the People's House during the "Hop on Over" Easter event on the Missouri Governor's Mansion lawn on April 13, 2019.



COMMUNITY SERVICE CHALLENGE

First Lady Parson has a big heart for public service and proudly works to instill this in Missouri children by inviting them to participate in her CommUNITY Service Challenge. Students preschool through sixth grade are encouraged to work and serve in their local communities over the summer months, giving back and growing in their community awareness, volunteerism, and advocacy for their neighbors and families. Children are awarded for their participation with a commemorative t-shirt highlighting their personal growth through CommUNITY service.



First Lady Parson visits Ozark West Elementary fourth-grade students during their participation in her statewide CommUNITY Service Challenge for Missouri elementary students on June 13, 2022.

TOY DISTRIBUTION

In the fall of 2023, the Moving Missouri Forward Foundation received a donation of two semi-loads of toys. First Lady Parson worked with the Missouri State Highway Patrol and Department of Social Services (DSS) to distribute these toys to less fortunate children throughout the state during the Christmas holidays.

DONUTS FOR FFA STUDENTS

Governor Parson started the tradition of driving a tractor from the Missouri Governor's Mansion to the capitol as part of the activities for the organization's National FFA Week. In February 2024, hundreds of FFA students gathered in Jefferson City for the final Drive Your Tractor to Work Day with Governor Parson and Lieutenant Governor Kehoe. MMFF provided donuts for the students during their leadership conferences that week.

JOBS FOR AMERICA'S GRADUATES

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) works with at-risk students to help them overcome barriers so they can graduate high school and enter the workforce or pursue higher education. These are talented but socially unprepared students who benefit from the "JAG Advantage"—a set of three strategies: project based learning, trauma informed care, and employer engagement. When JAG helps these students with their journey to find a career path that best suits them, it is a win for them and a win for the state. Consistently, students that are a part of JAG-Missouri have achieved a high school graduation rate of over 98 percent.



Governor Parson and First Lady Parson along with JAG students from across Missouri during the JAG State Convention on April 3, 2023.

Governor and First Lady Parson co-chaired JAG–Missouri, along with twenty-two business professionals and leaders from across the state. The JAG–Missouri Board of Directors is committed to continuing to grow the program. Governor Parson also served on the JAG National Board of Directors, along with eight other governors.

JAG–Missouri’s motto is “Help students reach their full potential by graduating from high school and being successful at whatever career they choose after graduation.” JAG is both a school dropout preventative and a school-to-work program, helping address the workforce development needs of the state while providing services to students in both urban and rural settings. JAG–Missouri is the only program the governor signed onto outside his official duties because he and First Lady Parson believe in the youth of the state. Since the first family got involved in JAG in 2017, the program grew from six schools serving 225 students across Missouri to 115 programs serving over five thousand students in eighty districts.

Governor and First Lady Parson were very involved in JAG–Missouri and hosted many events for its students, including:

- The First Lady Essay Contest each fall where the student with the winning essay from each school would bring two guests and were honored at a reception and program in Jefferson City
- A dessert reception hosted for over six hundred students and specialists on the Missouri Governor’s Mansion lawn in the spring during the Career Development Conference
- Classroom visits to encourage students to take advantage of the opportunities JAG offers, to work hard, and keep a positive attitude
- Provided uniforms annually for JAG state officers
- Featuring the JAG Christmas tree at the Missouri Governor’s Mansion with ornaments created by each JAG program
- Funded Community Service and Entrepreneurship Grants for JAG classrooms
- Provided clothing/luggage allowance for the national JAG Career Association competitive events participants
- JAG challenge coins presented to each student in visits with First Lady Parson

While fulfilling her role as first lady, two quotes of encouragement she often shared during her many visits with young people across the state were, “It is better to prepare for an opportunity that never comes than to have an opportunity come and not be prepared,” and a quote given by a JAG student, “If it is to be, it is up to me.”

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

First Lady Parson is a tireless advocate for children with special needs and their families. She believes parents should have access to the right resources and be equipped to navigate the challenges that come with caring for a child with special needs. All children have abilities and First Lady Parson was happy to help highlight the role they can play in society when given the opportunities.

Taking a first step, the First Lady Parson ensured all events at the Missouri Governor's Mansion would be accessible for children with special needs. Beyond public events, First Lady Parson hosted children from the Special Learning Center for inclusive Easter egg hunts, including table top hunts for wheelchairs or other mobility aids, as well as delivered cookies with Santa fluent in American Sign Language to Missouri School of the Deaf students.

In addition, her Moving Missouri Forward Foundation supported children with special needs by funding specialized exam and gym equipment for children with autism at the ARC of the Ozarks in Springfield, providing an all-inclusive playground at the Barry-Lawrence County Developmental Center, and contributing to an additional ropes course at Camp Barnabas.



First Lady Parson reads *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* to students from the Missouri School for the Deaf during a Cookies with Santa event at the People's House on December 5, 2023.

OTHER SERVICE

First Lady Parson served as a board member on the Missouri State Fair Foundation, which is dedicated to cultivating the future of agriculture through preservation and education. Through this organization, she has participated in the “No Limits Pig Show,” designed for children with disabilities to participate during the Missouri State Fair.



First Lady Parson hands her challenge coin to a No Limit Pig Show exhibitor during the 2023 Missouri State Fair.



First Lady Parson and Senator Sandy Crawford with the first-, second-, and third-place winners of the First Lady's Annual Pie Contest at the 2023 Missouri State Fair.

During her first year, First Lady Parson responded to a request from the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization, working with Second Lady Claudia Kehoe to reinstate the Missouri Mentorship Initiative, allowing three hundred Missouri state employees to mentor students. She also hosted an event for Big Brothers Big Sisters at the Missouri Governor's Mansion to teach life skills including how to write a thank you note, decorate a cookie, and sew on a button.

In her hometown, First Lady Parson also continues to serve on the Bolivar Educational Advancement Foundation.



First Lady Parson poses with a Big Brothers Big Sisters student and their craft at the Missouri Governor's Mansion on September 27, 2022.

THE PEOPLE'S HOUSE

Since 1872, the Missouri Governor's Mansion has seen exceptional trials and triumphs of history at the heart of the capitol city. It is one of the oldest governors' homes in the United States and still serves as the official residence of the Missouri First Family. First Lady Teresa Parson worked hard to make the Missouri Governor's Mansion, which she called the People's House, more accessible to the public through a variety of events and special occasions. Volunteer docents with the Friends of the Missouri Governor's Mansion organization aided with giving public tours of the first floor for thousands of visitors. First Lady Parson created Mr. Buzzaround as a mansion mascot to use on her website and social media to share room by room tours of the mansion, including historic significance in each room.



Governor Parson and First Lady Parson host faith leaders from across the state during one of their Faith Leaders Luncheons at the Missouri Governor's Mansion on February, 8, 2022.

Portraits of all first ladies are displayed in the Missouri Governor's Mansion, and First Lady Parson's was added to the collection. Her portrait contains some hidden items that are of significant importance to their family, including the reflection of their children's initials "SCH" and "KLP" in the glass of the door, "150" on the keyhole to represent the mansion's age during their term, "1985" on the door handle for the year the governor and first lady were married, "200" in the rod iron fence to celebrate the state's bicentennial,

“6” in the fence in honor of their six grandchildren, forty pearls on her necklace to represent her forty years in the banking industry, her blue dress represents her hometown Bolivar Liberators, and there is a “57” in the tree branches in reference to the fifty-seventh governor of the state. As a result of their rural upbringings, the setting of her portrait is outdoors. First Lady Parson is also opening the door to the People’s House as a significance of opening the home to the public during their time in office.



On August 8, 2022, Governor Parson and First Lady Teresa Parson unveil the first lady's official portrait that will join twenty-eight other portraits of Missouri first ladies displayed on the first floor of the Missouri Governor's Mansion.

Renovations

Governor and First Lady Parson were incredible stewards of the People's House, allowing many needed repairs to take place. Maintaining the residence was a task undertaken by First Lady Parson and the mansion team in partnership with the Office of Administration and Friends of the Missouri Governor's Mansion organization. Efforts were taken to maintain the Renaissance Revival design and reference to the apsidal shape throughout the home, representing the arial shape of the house. Throughout the years, the Missouri Governor's Mansion has been restored and improved, but the impressive characteristics of the original mansion remain. Projects in order to preserve the structure and its historic treasures during the Parson

administration included major heating, cooling, and plumbing updates; refinishing wood floors and purchase of new rugs; remodeling bathrooms throughout the house; new windows and remodel of sunporch; plaster repair and repainting in each room; expanded parking; construction of pergola; elevator expansion, as well as complete remodel of the Maus House. Having rural roots, and to honor agriculture as the number one industry of the state, the Missouri First Family also added raised garden beds, two bee hives, and a chicken coop to the grounds. These updates will allow families to continue to share in the rich history of the home for many years to come. As Missourians pioneer the path to the future, the legacy will continue.

Holidays/Hosting

Every spring the Missouri First Family would invite all legislators and elected officials with their families to the annual Legislative BBQ on the mansion lawn. Guests all enjoyed a taste of Missouri buffet, yard games, and music.

The Parson Family Fall Festival was an annual event for the public to come to the Missouri Governor's Mansion lawn to enjoy vendors, bounce house, face painting, hay rides, kettle corn, and music. It was a fun event with activities and excitement for all ages.



Governor Parson and First Lady Parson along with Lieutenant Governor Mike Kehoe and Second Lady Claudia Kehoe pose with "Tom Sawyer" and "Becky Thatcher" during the Parson Family Fall Festival at the Missouri Governor's Mansion on October 6, 2018.



Visitors queued up to enter the grounds during the Parson Family Fall Festival at the Missouri Governor's Mansion on October 6, 2018.



Governor Parson poses with "Beauty and the Beast" in the Governor Gardens during the Parson Family Fall Festival on October 29, 2022.



Governor, First Lady, and granddaughter Sophie Parson pose with the spooky decor during a family visit ahead of the Parson Family Fall Festival on October 29, 2022.



Governor, First Lady, and granddaughter Sophie Parson greet a cowgirl in the Governor Gardens during the Parson Family Fall Festival on October 29, 2022.

The spirit of Christmas was always shared with the public during the annual tree lighting and Candlelight Tours to showcase the extravagant decorations of the Missouri Governor's Mansion. Each year a large Christmas tree on the lawn was installed by Missouri Department of Conservation. The Missouri First Family would invite high school choirs to provide entertainment and the public was welcome to flow through the home to kick off the holiday season.

Veterans Dinners

While in office, Governor and First Lady Parson hosted several dinners and events at the Missouri Governor's Mansion to celebrate their unwavering support of the military and Missouri's own veterans. To create an unforgettable experience during each of these visits, the first family asked the place settings of the USS *Missouri* Silver be brought out for service. Hopefully, each guest will always hold a special place in their hearts for the time spent at the People's House.

First Lady Parson helped recognize April as being the "Month of the Military Child" in many ways, including visiting students and inviting families to the Missouri Governor's Mansion in celebration. For the first time in many decades, Governor and First Lady Parson revived the traditional Missouri Military Ball at the Missouri Governor's Mansion during the holiday season in 2023. It was an honor to rekindle the tradition and honor service members from all the military installations across the state. The 135th Army Band and Smith-Cotton High School JROTC were very supportive in this event.



The Missouri Governor's Mansion dining table is set with silver service from the USS *Missouri* (BB-63).



First Lady Parson poses with Second Lady Claudia Kehoe and military spouses during a luncheon at the Missouri Governor’s Mansion on November 7, 2022.



Governor and First Lady Parson with General Thomas and Mrs. Barbara Busseire and Major General Levon and Mrs. Linda Cumpton during the military ball held at the Missouri Governor’s Mansion on December 30, 2023.

Governor Parson and First Lady Parson host FFA State Officers at the Missouri Governor's Mansion on April 26, 2021.







Governor Parson delivers the State of the State Address in the Missouri Senate chamber on January 27, 2021. (Photo by Tim Bommel)

APPENDIX

State of the State Address

January 27, 2021

In an unprecedented move, the 2021 State of the State Address was delivered in the Missouri Senate chamber instead of the traditional Missouri House of Representatives chamber. This change in venue was a result of House leadership citing the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic made its chamber inaccessible. Due to this change, the text of the governor's 2021 address was not archived within the Journal of the House.

Thank you, Lieutenant Governor, Senator Schatz, statewide officials, and state legislators.

It is an honor to stand before you today as the 57th Governor of the Great State of Missouri. At some point in our lives, many of us have probably been reminded of the importance of considering the past when making decisions for the future. This advice seems especially fitting given the challenges we have faced over the past year. It also seems fitting that such a historic milestone – Missouri's Bicentennial celebration – coincides with

these challenges. Missouri has seen some difficult days in the past 200 years, from the Civil War and the Great Depression, women's suffrage and civil rights, to the COVID-19 crisis and countless other hardships. But through it all, Missouri has prevailed.

The first time I stood here and addressed the elected leaders of Missouri, we had just experienced a chaotic and unprecedented series of events. Most new administrations have at least 60 days to prepare – ours had 60 hours. The first six months of our administration were hectic to say the least. We were faced with quick decisions on a \$30 billion state budget and nearly 150 pieces of legislation that had just passed the General Assembly. That same summer, some regions of our state were facing one of the most severe droughts in Missouri history, and violent crime was escalating. The following year, Missouri experienced historic flooding that impacted communities across the state for months on end. Tornadoes left paths of destruction in communities throughout Missouri, and violent crime in our metro areas continued to escalate. Once again, this past year has brought many challenges with a worldwide pandemic that has stressed our health care system like never before, caused many deaths and much sickness, left thousands of Missourians out of work,

devastated small business, and many more impacts we will likely be dealing with for years to come. When the first COVID-19 case was identified in Missouri in March, our administration was fully engaged and immediately on the ground in St. Louis. Since that time, we have worked nonstop to take a balanced approach, fight the virus, and keep Missourians as safe as possible. We pulled together our entire Cabinet and every state agency to coordinate our statewide response. We convened weekly calls for 10 straight months with community leaders and medical experts. We waived nearly 600 statutes and regulations to provide more flexibility and safety for Missourians. We went from testing only a few thousand people each week to over 100,000 a week. We were a leading state in developing our dashboard of Missouri-specific data. We launched the Show Me Strong Recovery Plan to support Missouri citizens, businesses, and communities. We distributed \$520 million in CARES Act funds to local jurisdictions within 10 days. We helped secure over \$11 billion in low-interest loans for Missouri small businesses through the SBA. We mobilized the Missouri National Guard to assist with response efforts and constructed an alternate care site in 11 days in the St. Louis region. We delivered Remdesivir to hospitals across the state at all hours of

the night and brought in additional health care staff to further expand hospital capacity. We received national recognition for our partnership with Google on the PPE Marketplace, and have continued to expand our own state supply. We have now shipped over 22 million gowns, 18 million gloves, eight million surgical masks, five million N95 masks, and one million face shields to frontline health care providers. We were one of the first states in the nation to submit our COVID-19 vaccine plan, and have now administered nearly 400,000 doses to Missourians. The bottom line is that we have been working day in and day out to fight COVID-19 while also dealing with civil unrest, violent crime, and a difficult budget.

As I look to the next four years, however, I believe it is important to not only remember the challenges, but also the many great accomplishments we've had. For instance, we were still able to attract and expand businesses across Missouri, including Accenture Federal Services in St. Louis; Chewy, Inc. in Belton; Amazon in Republic; Kawasaki in Maryville; Tyler Pipe Company and Armstrong World Industries in Marshfield; Burns & McDonnell in Kansas City; Boeing in St. Charles; and Ford in Claycomo, for a total investment of over \$1 billion and nearly 10,000 new jobs. All of these announcements

highlight Missouri's increasingly competitive business climate. Since 2018, Missouri has jumped from 21st to 11th in the nation among Site Selectors. This is thanks in large part to the success of our workforce development programs. Through Missouri One Start, for example, nearly 100,000 Missourians have received training through partnerships with over 400 companies. Since launching the newly revamped program, businesses have invested approximately \$2.5 billion in Missouri. Our MO Excels grant program has also been a huge success, helping us fund critical projects like the nursing program expansions at Missouri Western and St. Louis Community College. Ranken Technical College also announced a new \$7.5 million advanced manufacturing training facility in Troy, Missouri, in partnership with the Lincoln County School District – a great example of what we can accomplish when education, government, and the private sector work together.

In addition to workforce development, we also continued to move forward on critical infrastructure projects. In just over one year, over 100 of Missouri's poorest bridges have been repaired or replaced through our Focus on Bridges program. When the program is complete, it will have accelerated the repair or replacement of 250 bridges across the state at a

remarkable value for our citizens. Construction is now complete on a major levee in Northwest Missouri to help ease future flooding along the Missouri River – another great partnership between local communities, state government, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Construction also continues on the East Locust Creek reservoir, and we continue to move forward with the Buck O’Neil Bridge in Kansas City, the new Rocheport Bridge along I-70, the I-270 interstate project in North County St. Louis, and a new overpass in West Plains.

Although COVID-19 has had an overwhelming impact on the economy, Missouri has made outstanding progress in a short amount of time. In fact, Missouri is among the top tier of states for total economic recovery with 71 percent of jobs recovered. We are among the lowest unemployment rates in the country and have again reached number two in the United States for apprenticeships. Time and time again, our administration has addressed the challenges of our communities and our state head on rather than leaving them for another day, another administration, or another generation. Over the past two-and-a-half years, we’ve offered bold solutions, and we have gotten results. But results aren’t just about numbers on a bottom

line. They are also about improving lives, creating opportunities, and keeping families safe. I sometimes joke about my gray hair, but to be very honest, this gray hair was earned through thick and thin, ups and downs, successes and failures. And the last challenge I have left as Governor of this state is how I can make Missouri a better place. A better place to raise a family. A better place to find a job. A better place to open a business, and a better place for our children and grandchildren to achieve the American Dream.

It is important that we continue to follow through on key investments in workforce development and infrastructure. We must also continue finding ways to strengthen public safety, improve health care, and make state government more accountable. I have said many times that our children are the workforce of tomorrow, and if we are to truly make a difference in their lives, it starts with early childhood development. In August, I had the opportunity to visit Unleashing Potential in St. Louis, an early childhood education center for children ages six weeks to five years old. Joining us today is President and CEO Darlene Sowell and Director of Early Childhood Education Denise Carter. Throughout COVID-19, these ladies worked extremely hard to adapt to the challenges and stay the course, never losing focus

on what matters most – the children of our state. They are true champions of early childhood education, and we are proud to recognize them today. Would Miss Sowell and Miss Carter please stand to be recognized?

To help strengthen Missouri's early childhood system, we are excited to propose the consolidation of several different programs and divisions across three state agencies into one new office – the Office of Childhood. This new office will not only help streamline the operation of several state programs, but also allow us to place a bigger focus on early childhood development – a critical component to the future success of Missourians for generations to come. In addition to early childhood, we will also continue to invest in K-12 education. It goes without saying that this past year has been especially hard on students, parents, teachers, and administrators. These challenges were not just social and emotional, but also financial, which is why we are once again proposing to fully fund the Foundation Formula.

Another key component for schools moving forward will be assessing the impact virtual learning has had on our students. Though we may not understand these impacts for some time, it is important that we test and adjust education accordingly to help all students succeed. Speaking of strengthening education, we must

also continue to increase opportunities for job training at the high school level. Career Ready 101 is a program designed to help prepare high school students for the workforce. This year, I am calling for the expansion of Career Ready 101 to all 57 existing career centers around the state. This program also helps students prepare for the WorkKeys Assessment, a program recognized by hundreds of Missouri employers in over 100 counties. This credential is an important stepping stone for students who are not immediately college bound but have the knowledge and skills to fill high-demand jobs. This year, our goal is to offer 12,000 new high school students the opportunity to receive the WorkKeys certification ... and by the end of my term, I want to see all 114 Missouri counties become certified work-ready communities. For our college-bound students, the A+ Scholarship is a popular and widely used program, and during COVID-19 we saw an even bigger demand. That is why I am calling for an increase of more than \$13 million for A+ Scholarships.

Another program that is becoming increasingly popular is the Fast Track program proposed by our administration to help working-age, underemployed adults advance their skills and careers. We are very proud that nearly 80 percent of Fast Track scholarship

recipients are women, and nearly 50 percent are first-generation college students. Today, we are happy to have two Fast Track participants here – Mallory Fox and Briana Tyler. Both Miss Fox and Miss Tyler are pursuing degrees in nursing through the Fast Track program. We are very proud of these ladies for their commitment to achieving their goals and bettering their futures. Would Miss Fox and Miss Tyler please stand to be recognized? These ladies are two of many Missourians whose lives have been changed through Fast Track, and we are excited to continue the program this year.

In addition to these programs, we have also made great strides in expanding high-demand job training through MO Excels. I applaud the legislature for embracing these much-needed investments across the state. This year, we will seek to enhance this even further with a \$21 million investment across 15 new programs. On top of this, we are proposing five grants to start new health care associate programs at community colleges in Missouri. 2020 highlighted the critical need for skilled health care workers, and we want to meet this need by educating and training our Missouri workforce.

Another important group of our future workforce is the men and women who serve Missouri as state employees. Unfortunately, our state workforce is one

of the least competitive in terms of attracting future public servants. We must make changes. So once again, I am asking the legislature to fund a pay increase for state employees.

I have always said that you can't emphasize workforce development without infrastructure. They go hand in hand, and we must continue to invest in both in order to succeed. Now more than ever, we must capitalize on Missouri's strategic location in the center of the nation and build on the opportunity to become a powerful logistics hub, not only for the Midwest and the United States, but for all of North America. We are very excited about the new shipping technology that could create a corridor straight through Missouri into the heart of the country. This is why we are calling for a \$6.3 million investment in shovel-ready projects at Missouri's established ports. On top of this, we are also seeking \$25 million to fulfill the transportation cost-share program we established to help communities complete other important infrastructure projects.

When we talk about infrastructure, we most often think about our transportation system ... but equally important is access to high-speed broadband. We have made great strides in the past few years, and

I appreciate the legislature's commitment to broadband expansion. However, 2020 exposed many digital gaps, highlighting the importance of ensuring high-speed internet in all areas of Missouri, which is why this year, I am once again asking for a \$5 million investment to expand and improve broadband services across the state. Over the years, Missouri has also fallen behind in the maintenance of hundreds of millions of dollars in state assets, facilities, and buildings – all critical parts of our infrastructure. These are all paid with taxpayer dollars, and neglecting these commitments only increases costs for future generations and legislatures. This is why I am asking for a one-time expenditure of \$100 million to clear the backlog of maintenance projects from every part of the state.

Also important to Missouri's infrastructure system are our state parks and conservation areas. Unfortunately, this is another area where maintenance and rehabilitation have been neglected for decades. So this year, we are seeking approval for the Department of Natural Resources to complete infrastructure projects at 22 state parks. Speaking of infrastructure, we are proud that the Missouri Department of Transportation continued to move critical projects forward despite the challenges of the past year. All told, nearly 550 projects

took place across the state that injected approximately \$1 billion back into Missouri's construction industry and economy. On top of this, we recently allocated \$83 million for MoDOT through conservative financial management. These funds will be used for transportation infrastructure needs, including cost-share projects and low-volume roads – the backbone of our agricultural economy.

It is also worth mentioning that when every state in the nation was feeling the financial strain of COVID-19, we went back, sharpened our pencils, and put our AAA bond rating to work for our state. By refinancing and consolidating existing debt, we saved Missouri taxpayers approximately \$22 million. In addition, our responsible planning and management will allow us to supplement the Department of Labor's Unemployment Trust Fund and prevent a tax increase on all employers this year. And speaking of employers, I hope the first piece of legislation to hit my desk this year is a clean COVID-19 liability protection bill. Missouri businesses, manufacturers, health care providers, schools, churches, and many other entities across the state did not hesitate to step up and help their communities in the fight against COVID-19. None of these groups should be penalized for their efforts to help. They must be able to

continue serving the public without risk of unnecessary claims, and I look forward to working with the House and Senate to get this done.

In addition to COVID-19 liability, Wayfair must also be addressed. I hope the House and Senate will consider legislation to address the unfair advantage online retailers have over small businesses in Missouri. I am a strong supporter of lower taxes – in fact, I have signed several tax cuts into law. However, our small businesses, especially in smaller communities, are getting crushed right now because they cannot compete with huge online retailers. We must level that playing field and consider ways to responsibly invest those revenues and provide new opportunities for our state.

Another very important step we must take is increasing our financial stability. Given the financial challenges of the past year, I hope the legislature understands how critically important a cash operating expense fund is for the future of our state. I am proud of the discipline the legislature has shown in protecting the \$100 million we have set aside in all of our proposed budgets – but we cannot look at this on a year-by-year basis. In order to provide greater stability in the long term, we must allow these dollars to grow into a much bigger fund. I recognize that this may take some

flexibility away from the Governor's Office, but it is the right thing to do for the future of our state, and I am committed to leaving Missouri in a better financial position than I found it.

While all of this is key to Missouri's success, we must also continue to invest in public safety and building stronger communities. If we are to make real change, we must get violent crime under control in our communities. And we cannot do this without our law enforcement officers. These brave men and women risk their lives each day to keep us safe. We must support them, respect them, and give them the tools they need to do their jobs. Seated in the upper gallery is Lincoln University Police Chief and Peace Officer Standards and Training Commissioner Gary Hill. Chief Hill plays a critical role in the safety of our local community, and we are honored he is here today to represent our men and women in uniform. In June, I challenged the POST Commission to take a leading role in advancing the training Missouri provides officers and help improve relationships with the public. The Commission followed through on this challenge, voting in October to require annual training in de-escalation and bias recognition for all Missouri law enforcement officers. We believe

this training will lead to better interactions between law enforcement and the communities we serve. In addition to these changes, we recently granted Lincoln University a basic training license to establish the nation's first law enforcement training academy at a Historically Black College and University. At a time when law enforcement agencies are struggling to recruit officers – especially minority officers – this new training academy is a major step in the right direction. We look forward to working with Chief Hill and Lincoln University on this unique effort. Would Chief Hill please stand to be recognized? Thank you to Chief Hill and all Missouri law enforcement officers for your service.

My administration will also continue to support more coordination among local, state, and federal law enforcement through initiatives like Operation Legend. And to further support law enforcement, we are proposing \$1.5 million for the witness protection fund passed by the General Assembly during the special session on violent crime. And I hope the legislature will continue working with our office and the Attorney General to fight violent crime, support law enforcement officers, and make our communities safer. In order to build stronger, safer communities, we must also

improve the health and well-being of Missourians, and to do this, we must support our health care workers. For almost a year now, Missouri's doctors, nurses, and health care workers across the state have been on the frontlines without a break. They are tired and overwhelmed, but they continue to rise to the challenge and take care of Missourians. Here with us today is Cindy Sheets, a Registered Nurse at Truman Medical Center in Kansas City. During a visit to Truman Medical Center in October, I saw a video of Miss Sheets sharing her experience with COVID-19, and her words truly inspired me. She said that she is not fearful, because much like a soldier in war, this is what she signed up for. Every day, Miss Sheets has stepped up for fellow Missourians despite the risks and the challenges. She is a true representation of what health care is all about, and we are honored to have her here today. On behalf of all Missouri health care workers, would Miss Sheets please stand to be recognized? We cannot thank our health care workers enough, and we will continue to support them.

It goes without saying that COVID-19 has drastically changed the way we deliver health care. The demand for telehealth has increased significantly and will continue to be a major need going forward. This

is why we invested over \$5 million last year to expand broadband for telehealth across the state ... and why we are proposing over \$4 million to support telehealth and telemedicine for individuals with developmental disabilities. Additionally, we are seeking an investment of over \$20 million for 50 new community mental health and substance use disorder advocates and six new crisis stabilization centers across the state. These are important mental health investments for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

Our administration is also committed to ensuring patient protections, improving health care accessibility, and expanding health insurance options for Missourians, which leads me to another change we must make after the passage of Amendment 2 this past August. Like I have said many times, I will always uphold the will of the voters, and we will move forward with expanding Medicaid coverage to approximately 275,000 Missourians. However, it is important to remember that the costs of this expansion will be significant – hundreds of millions of dollars, in fact. This will have a major impact on other areas of our budget, and we must plan accordingly, which means staying vigilant in maintaining the program's integrity by protecting against fraud and waste.

Since the beginning of our administration, we have always challenged the status quo. From workforce development and infrastructure to reorganizing entire departments of state government, we have constantly pushed for greater efficiency, streamlining operations, and saving taxpayer money. This year, we will continue these changes with a focus on foster care and adoption. Our goal is to take a stressful, complex, and often frustrating process and consolidate rulemaking authority into one department. All of these changes in state government are exciting, but they are not possible without a talented and dedicated team. I want to take a moment to recognize my Cabinet not only for the incredible work they do on a daily basis, but also the dedication and professionalism they have shown throughout these trying times. Would members of my Cabinet please stand to be recognized?

I greatly appreciate all of these individuals. They continue to tell me the work they do would not be possible without their own teams of committed public servants, and I would have to agree with them completely.

It is also important to me to recognize the many other men and women who have gone above and beyond the call of duty, such as our doctors, nurses, and health care providers; public health professionals; county

health departments; law enforcement; first responders; teachers; child care providers; farmers; truck drivers; custodians; grocery store workers; and all Missourians who have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis. 2020 was filled with countless struggles, but each day, these individuals showed up and met these challenges with grit, strength, and determination. And I promise that for the next four years, you can expect the same determination to confront every challenge, propose bold solutions, and make this state a better place for generations to come.

Today, I would like to conclude by sharing a quote from one of our great American presidents, Teddy Roosevelt, titled “The Man in the Arena” in honor of the selfless men and women who have truly fought this battle for Missouri. “It is not the critic who counts; not the one who points out how the strong stumble, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to those who are actually in the arena, whose faces are marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strive valiantly; who err, who come short again and again. Because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends themselves in a worthy cause.

Who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if they fail, at least fails while daring greatly, so that their place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.” It is an honor to stand shoulder to shoulder with Missourians in the arena – those who have lifted one another up, pushed one another to be better, and who have remained devoted to a cause greater than themselves in the face of critics who will never know the strength it takes to endure these challenging times. Missouri, it is our time.

It is an honor and privilege to remain the 57th Governor of the State of Missouri. God bless Missouri, and God bless the United States of America.



Governor Parson helps celebrate the annual Fire Fighters Day and the fiftieth anniversary of the Missouri Division of Fire Safety in the capitol rotunda on April 5, 2022.





Governor Parson swears to uphold the Missouri Constitution during a swearing-in ceremony on June 4, 2019. (Photo by Tim Bommel)

TIMELINE

2018

June 1

Sworn in as the fifty-seventh governor of Missouri

June 11

Addresses a joint session of the Missouri legislature

June 18

Appoints Mike Kehoe as the forty-eighth lieutenant governor of Missouri

June 22

Signs first bills as governor (House Bills 1831 and 2101; Senate Bills 593, 594, and 782)

June 29

Signs fiscal year 2019 budget bills

July 12

Signs largest single-year income tax cut for Missourians

July 18

Calls on DNR to activate drought assessment committee

July 20

Responds to Branson duck boat tragedy

August 20

In response to the drought, announces emergency water and hay access and a free lottery for farmers interested in haying on state park land

August 21

Announces launch of the Missouri Way Management Training Program

August 22

Appoints Robert Cornejo to the Labor and Industrial Relations Committee

August 27

Appoints MSHP Colonel Sandra Karsten as the new director of the Department of Public Safety

August 30

Calls for a special session concurrent with veto session to focus on STEM and expanding treatment courts

September 26

Unanimously elected to join the board of Jobs for America's Graduates (As lieutenant governor, he and the first lady were named co-chairs of the JAG-Missouri Board of Directors in April 2017)

October 12

Signs Executive Order creating Bicentennial Commission

October 22

Appoints Todd Richardson as new MO HealthNet Division director

October 24

Signs Missouri's first Open Investment Policy Statement

Signs drug treatment court legislation (House Bill 2) passed during a special session in September

October 30

Signs STEM ed and computer science legislation (House Bill 3) passed during a special session in September

November 1

Appoints Eric Schmitt as attorney general

December 6

Attends Opioid Crisis Roundtable in St. Louis

December 19

Appoints Scott Fitzpatrick as state treasurer

2019

January 16

Delivers first State of the State Address

Announces the statewide Focus on Bridges program during State of the State Address

January 17

Announces restructuring of four state agencies to improve economic and workforce development

February 1

Announces Missouri is on track to become a model employer state for individuals living with disabilities and has been selected for a mentorship program through the USDOL to help achieve this goal

February 13

Began statewide infrastructure to Focus on Bridges by visiting five sites

February 21

Appointed to Council of Governors by President Trump

February 28

Appoints Barry Orscheln to Conservation Commission

March 4

Announces new Child Care Working Group

March 5

Appoints Lieutenant Colonel Eric T. Olson as the twenty-fourth superintendent of MSHP

March 13

Signs Executive Order to create Missouri School Safety Task Force

March 15

Appoints Ken Zellers as acting director of DOR

March 21

Declares first flood-related state of emergency in Missouri during administration

April 16

Missouri Supreme Court affirms governor's authority to appoint the lieutenant governor

April 22

Calls special election for two House vacancies (Districts 99 and 158)

April 24

Requests federal disaster declaration in response to flooding

May 14

Appoints Jennifer Tidball as acting director of DSS

May 24

Signs House Bill 126 Missouri Stands for the Unborn Act

May 28

Promotes cattle industry with Missouri Beef Promotion Tour

May 31

Signs Senate Bill 391 creating a consistent regulatory framework for agricultural producers

June 10

Signs fiscal year 2020 budget bills

Cost-Share Program created during the signing of the budget bills with \$50 million appropriated by general assembly

June 11

Signs Senate Bill 182 to end Missouri–Kansas border war

June 14

Embarks on first trade mission (France, Germany, Switzerland)

July 10

Signs resolution designating KC Chiefs as state's official NFL team

July 17

Executive Order creates the Missouri Health Insurance Innovation Task Force

July 18

Executive Order establishes Flood Recovery Advisory Working Group

July 25

Appoints Colonel Levon Cumpton as adjutant general of the MONG

July 31

Embarks on second trade mission (Australia)

August 1

Calls special elections for four House vacancies (Districts 22, 36, 74, and 78)

August 2

Appoints Dr. Steven Harrison to the Conservation Commission

August 21

Announces special session to address motor vehicle sales tax allowances

August 28

Plan to restructure four state agencies takes effect to improve state government

August 29

MoDOT to receive \$20.7 million federal grant to improve bridges through the USDOT's Competitive Highway Bridge Program

September 16

Embarks on business outreach mission with California Bay Area technology executives

September 19

Announces state's plan to help combat violent crime in St. Louis

September 25

Signs House Bill 1 involving vehicle sales tax credits

October 2

Appoints Ken Zellers as director of DOR

October 15

Directs DHSS, DESE, and DPS to develop campaign to deter vaping

November 12

Missouri ranked second nationally for new and completed apprenticeships

Construction begins on first replacement bridge under Focus on Bridges

November 18

Announces launch of Clear the Air Youth Vaping Awareness Campaign

December 13

Announces GM's decision to invest \$1.5 billion and retain four thousand jobs in Wentzville

December 16

Announces twenty transportation projects will receive \$50 million under Transportation Cost-Share Program

2020

January 13

Appoints Senator Shalonn “Kiki” Curls to the Labor and Industrial Commission and Senator Jason Holsman to the PSC

January 15

Delivers second State of the State Address

February 5

Participates with First Lady Parson in KC parade celebrating Chiefs’ Super Bowl LIV win

February 25

All three major credit rating agencies affirm Missouri’s AAA rating

March 3

Holds initial briefing and press conference regarding COVID-19

March 13

Declares state of emergency in response to COVID-19

March 18

Works with US SBA to activate small-business disaster loans

April 3

Issues statewide “Stay Home Missouri” order (April 6–24)

April 16

Extends “Stay Home Missouri” through May 3
Announces Show Me Strong Recovery Plan to reopen state’s economy

April 20

Announces \$47 million in additional expenditure restrictions to ensure balanced budget

April 22

Signs House Bills 1511 and 1452 allowing license reciprocity for military spouses relocating to Missouri with their active-duty partner

Announces launch of Missouri PPE Marketplace

Announces deployment of decontamination system to assist with the N95 mask shortage

April 24

Extends state of emergency through June 15

May 4

First phase of Show Me Strong Recovery Plan launched

Announces disbursement of CARES funds to local governments

May 6

Announces Missouri will receive \$66 million for child-care assistance and \$1.5 million for food banks under CARES

May 20

Announces launch of new Missouri-specific COVID-19 dashboard

May 26

Signs proclamation placing Medicaid expansion on August primary ballot

June 1

Announces \$209 million in added expenditure restrictions due to COVID-19

June 9

Signs Senate Bill 631, taking security measures to safeguard election process and protect Missouri voters during COVID-19

June 11

Announces Missouri will fully reopen and enter Phase 2 of recovery plan

June 17

Requests federal disaster declaration for nineteen Missouri counties affected by severe storms

June 30

Signs fiscal year 2021 budget bills

July 2

Signs House Bills 1768 and 2120 extending Missouri Broadband Grant Program

July 6

Signs House Bill 2046 expanding license reciprocity provisions

Signs Senate Bill 599 adding flexibility for the Missouri FIRST Program

July 15

Announces special session to address violent crime

July 16

Announces Show Me Strong Pledge, Business Recovery Lab, and \$15 million in grant funding to rebuild tourism industry

July 30

Appoints Margy Eckelkamp to the Conservation Commission

August 10

Expands call to special session on violent crime

October 1

Announces over \$5 million in CARES Act grants to expand child-care services on five Missouri campuses to low-income student parents

October 2

Orders external review of all seven Missouri Veterans Homes and their COVID-19 operations

October 7

Announces over \$133 million in CARES Act and general revenue funds

October 21

Announces special session on supplemental budget bill

October 28

Missouri recognized as national leader in Digital Technology Best Practices

November 3

Elected to first full term as governor with a record 57.1 percent of the vote

November 24

Announces launch of a new vaccine website for Missouri residents

December 14

Announces first shipments of COVID-19 vaccines arrive

December 18

Missouri completes one-hundredth bridge in Focus on Bridges Program

December 30

Announces \$46 million in child-care funding

2021

January 5

Initial 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Task
Force meeting

January 6

Announces release of nearly \$127 million in fiscal year
2021 funds

Announces \$68 million in federal funding for higher
education institutions

Announces \$4 million in CARES funding to St. Louis
Community College in Forest Park for on-campus
child-care services

January 8

Appoints Sheila Solon as acting director of the
Division of Professional Registration

January 11

*Sworn in to full term at the 2021
Bicentennial Inauguration*

January 26

Announces launch of new COVID
vaccination dashboard

January 28

Delivers third State of the State Address
Announces new Office of Childhood

February 11

Signs House Bill 16 providing more than \$324 million for Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

March 1

Announces release of remaining \$280 million in fiscal year 2021 general revenue

March 17

Meets with USACE to discuss recovery from 2019 flood

March 22

Announces \$300 million transfer of COVID relief funds to UI Trust Fund

March 23

Establishes Show Me Strong Recovery Task Force

April 20

Appoints Robert Knodell as acting director of DHSS

April 22

Signs House Bills 429 and 430 supporting Missouri adoptive families and children in foster care

Announces LIHEAP changes to help more Missourians pay energy bills

May 11

Announces Missouri will end all federal pandemic-related unemployment benefits

May 13

Signs fiscal year 2021 supplemental budget bill over \$2.1 billion

May 24

Appoints Honorable Robin Ransom as Missouri Supreme Court judge

June 7

Signs Senate Bill 63 creating statewide prescription drug monitoring program

June 14

Signs House Bill 85 establishing Second Amendment Preservation Act

June 15

Signs House Bill 271 prohibiting local COVID vaccine passports

June 23

Calls a special session to address funding for MO HealthNet Program

June 30

Signs Senate Bills 153 and 97 (Wayfair legislation)

July 13

Signs Senate Bill 262 increasing transportation funding for critical infrastructure projects

July 21

Announces Donald G. Kauerauf as acting director of DHSS

August 11

Announces \$30 million funding to support health-care system

Appoints Dru Buntin as director of DNR

August 19

Announces \$400 million plan to improve
broadband infrastructure

August 27

Ends existing COVID-related state of emergency

August 31

Mobilizes MONG to support Hurricane Ida relief

September 21

Announces launch with Arkansas Governor Kelly of
Regional National Security Crossroads

September 30

Celebrates with Arkansas Governor Hutchinson
Partnership to Complete I-49 Connector

October 8

Creates ARPA spending toolkits for local governments

October 12

Launches with MoDOT Rocheport
Bridge construction

Announces five cabinet transitions:

DED Acting Director Maggie Kost

DMH Acting Director Valerie Huhn

DSS Acting Director Robert Knodell

OA Acting Commissioner Ken Zellers

DOR Acting Director Joseph Plaggenberg

November 22

Joins fourteen Republican governors in signing onto
Operation Open Roads

December 6

Recommends 5.5 percent COLA increase and \$15 per hour minimum base pay standard for all state employees

December 29

Appoints Wayne Wallingford as new DOR director and Valerie Huhn as DHM director

2022**January 7**

Establishes Missouri Early Childhood State Advisory Council

January 19

Delivers fourth State of the State Address

February 1

Appoints Richard W. Moore as temporary DHSS acting director

February 23

Announces new Project Eagle Apprenticeship Program in coordination with MONG and DHEWD

February 24

Signs fiscal year 2022 supplemental budget bill, including a 5.5 percent COLA increase for all state team workers

March 1

Appoints Paula Nickelson as acting director of DHSS

March 11

Embarks with First Lady Parson on trade mission to United Kingdom and Ireland

March 30

Announces end to COVID-19 crisis in Missouri

April 4

Announces development of Missouri Talent Pathways

Appoints Rodney Campbell Jr. to the Labor and Industrial Relations Commission

April 19

Joins twenty-five governors in forming American Governors' Border Strike Force

May 13

Signs second fiscal year 2022 supplemental budget bill

May 16

Announces launch of ARPA website

May 18

Approves Missouri's congressional district boundaries

June 11

Signs House Bill 2005 expanding property rights protections

June 27

Signs proclamation to end elective abortions in Missouri

Passenger train derailment near Mendon (four fatalities)

June 30

Signs House Bill 2116 which establishes the No Patient Left Alone Act

Signs fiscal year 2023 state operating budget bills

July 1

Calls for special session for permanent tax relief,
largest tax cut in state history

July 16

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline goes live

July 23

Embarks with First Lady Parson on trade mission to
Germany and the Netherlands

August 8

Unveils with First Lady Parson her official portrait

August 12

Appoints Kathy Swan to the Labor and Industrial
Relations Commission

August 22

Calls special session to make historic income tax cuts
and extend key agriculture tax credit programs

September 26

Makes one-hundredth judicial appointment

October 5

Signs largest income tax cut in state history

October 28

Announces \$1 million Missouri Blue Scholarship Fund
to assist Law Enforcement Academy recruits

November 10

Embarks with First Lady Parson on trade mission to
Israel, UAE, and Greece

November 23

Appoints Andrew Bailey as attorney general

December 20

Appoints Vivek Malek as state treasurer

2023

January 11

Recommends 8.7 percent COLA increase for all state team members and \$2 per hour shift differential for those working in certain congregate care facilities

January 18

Delivers fifth State of the State Address

January 19

Establishes Master Plan on Aging

January 23

Announces state has awarded \$261 million through ARPA Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program to fund sixty expansion projects

February 2

Announces www.mogovchallenge.com to further efforts to reduce veteran suicides

February 7

Train collision with FedEx truck near Pleasant Hill (one fatality)

February 15

Participates with First Lady Parson in KC parade celebrating Chiefs' Super Bowl LVII win

February 16

Announces funding through the Office of Childhood for new partnership programs between businesses and child-care providers

February 24

Appoints Dr. Bennett Boggs as commissioner of DHEWD

February 27

Signs House Bill 14 securing 8.7 percent COLA increase for state team members and a \$2 per hour shift differential for state congregate care staff

March 20

Embarks with First Lady Parson on trade mission to Sweden and Germany

April 27

Signs Senate Bill 51 allowing Missourians more direct access to physical therapy

May 1

Announces first round of School Safety Grant funds has been distributed

May 5

Announces \$75 million for shovel-ready industrial site development

May 15

Signs House Bill 15, second fiscal year 2023 supplemental budget bill

May 19

Appoints Gabriel (Gabe) Gore as City of St. Louis circuit attorney.

May 31

Leads coalition of Republican governors in opposing Biden's mortgage fee changes

June 1

Appoints Kayla Hahn to MO PSC

Elevates Acting Directors Knodell and Nickelson to full status

June 7

Signs Senate Bills 39 and 49 to protect Missouri children and female sports

June 16

Appoints Michelle Hataway as acting director of DED

June 30

Signs fiscal year 2024 state operating and capital improvement budget bills

July 17

Appoints Michael Leara as state supervisor of Division of Alcohol and Tobacco Control

August 3

Outlined options for spending the \$50 million budgeted for railroad crossing improvements in response to the fatal passenger train derailment near Mendon in June 2022

September 12

Appoints Honorable Kelly Broniec to Missouri Supreme Court

October 2

Recipients of second round of School Safety Grants announced

October 7

Embarks with First Lady Parson on trade mission to Japan

October 30

Appoints Honorable Ginger Gooch as Supreme Court judge

November 3

Announces forthcoming book *No Turnin' Back*

November 30

Appoints Trevor Foley acting director of DOC

December 6

Announces new investment, partnerships to reduce maternal mortality

December 19

Celebrates completion of Focus on Bridges Program

December 30

Revives and hosts with First Lady Parson the Missouri Military Ball

2024

January 2

Bans China-owned agricultural land near critical military facilities

January 24

Delivers sixth State of the State Address

Recommends 3.2 percent COLA increase for all state team members

Announces Missouri has secured a \$92.8 million INFRA Grant to improve I-70

February 4

Joins thirteen other governors at a press conference at Eagle Pass, Texas, to stand in solidarity with Texas's right to defend itself against President Joe Biden's border crisis

February 6

Appoints Kayla Hahn as chair of the PSC

Appoints Al Li as chair of the Missouri Commission on Human Rights

Appoints Brittney Southworth as vice chair of the Missouri Commission on Human Rights

February 14

Participates with First Lady Parson in KC parade celebrating Chiefs' Super Bowl LVIII win

February 20

Announces deployment of two hundred MONG members, twenty-two MSHP troopers to Texas Southern Border

February 23

Appoints Ed Adams, Travis Elliott, Todd Hays, Jamie Johanson, and Byron Roach to the State Fair Commission

Appoints Chris Cole to the Missouri Real Estate Commission

Governor's biography *No Turnin' Back* released

March 20

Announces Google's selection of Kansas City for a new \$1 billion data center that will support up to 1,300 jobs

April 10

Announces \$5 million in equipment grants to Missouri law enforcement, fire service, and EMS providers

April 12

Elevates DED Acting Director Michelle Hataway to full-status director

Appoints Ann Marie Baker to the State Highways and Transportation Commission

Appoints Dr. Tawni Ferrarini and Dr. Thomas Prater to the State Board of Education

Appoints John Mitchell to the PSC

Appoints Jeremy Schneider and Whitney Smith to the MEC

April 19

Announces Jason Sumners to be director of MDC

April 26

Signs Executive Order 24–05 extending Missouri’s drought alert to September 1, 2024

May 2

Signs Executive Order 24–06 activating state emergency operations plan in response to severe weather and flooding

May 7

Signs Senate Bill 727 and House Bill 2287 into law increasing Missouri teacher pay, incentivizing five-day school weeks, increasing support for early childhood education programs, and increasing funding for small schools, among other provisions

May 8

Signs House Bill 2016, which includes funding for Missouri's Southern Border deployment, into law while visiting MONG soldiers deployed to the Southern Border in Texas

May 9

Signs House Bill 2634 into law prohibiting public funds to abortion providers or their affiliates in the state of Missouri

Signs House Bill 1803 into law expanding MOBUCK\$ Program from \$800 million to \$1.2 billion annually

May 18

Embarks with First Lady Parson on trade mission to Italy

May 28

Announces Amendment 1 (SJR 26) and Amendment 4 (SJR 38) will be placed on the 2024 August primary election ballot

June 12

Requests federal disaster declaration in response to severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding

June 13

Breaks ground on historic Improve I-70 Project in Columbia

Highlights the successful conclusion of Missouri's months-long southern border deployment in support of Texas Governor Greg Abbott's Operation Lone Star mission to secure the Texas-Mexico border

June 26

Signs Executive Order 24–08 extending state of emergency in preparation for potential Missouri River flooding

June 28

Signs fiscal year 2025 state operating and capital improvement budget bills

July 8

Signs Senate Bill 1388 supporting billions in business investment (National Nuclear Security Administration campus in KC)

July 9

Signs four bills into law: House Bill 2057 and Senate Bills 894, 756, and 754

Signs five bills into law: House Bills 1912, 2134/1956, and 2062 and Senate Bills 872 and 895

July 11

Signs House Bill 1495 and Senate Bill 91 supporting Missouri’s veterans, military members

Acts on remaining legislation approved during 2024 legislative session

July 12

Appoints Senator Lauren Arthur and Rodney Campbell Jr. to the Labor and Industrial Relations Commission

Appoints Brian Hammons to the Coordinating Board for Higher Education

Appoints Jim Martin to the Missouri Ethics Commission

July 22

Embarks with First Lady Parson on trade mission to the United Kingdom and Belgium

July 23

Federal government approves governor's request for major disaster declaration

July 30

Announces historic fifth income tax cut during his administration

August 1

Announces Executive Order prohibiting sale of unregulated psychoactive cannabis products

August 10

Embarks with First Lady Parson on trade mission to Panama

August 15

Participates in the official ground-breaking ceremony for the new 150,000-square-foot Governor Michael L. Parson Arena at the Missouri State Fairgrounds

August 22

Formally rebukes Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft's inaction and refusal to protect Missouri children from the sale of unregulated psychoactive cannabis products

October 23

Rescinds 176 Executive Orders dating back to the 1980s, which were found to be no longer necessary or applicable, in an effort to cut red tape, streamline bureaucracy, and leave state government better than he found it



Governor Parson looks back after he drove a tractor from the Missouri Governor's Mansion to the Missouri State Capitol during the National FFA Week celebration on February 19, 2019.



